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THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE CLOTHING TRADE

BY

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PREFACE.

ALL that the following study attempts is to give a description of the actual conditions under which women are working in a certain limited field of activity. My purpose has been to reveal special economic and social facts and relations, not to establish or defend any particular methods of regulation.

Purely technical trade matters have as far as possible been avoided, but where they have been introduced it has seemed advisable to adopt the rule of employing invariably the terms used by those engaged in the industry itself. This is the only justification for the use of such expressions as "pants," "edge-baster," "overalls-operator," and the like.

The following description is based chiefly upon my personal investigations and records made during the last four years. In many cases, however, these investigations would have been impossible but for assistance most kindly given. I am indebted to Mr. John R. Commons for the privilege of reading all the evidence collected by him in the preparation of a report on the clothing industry for the Industrial Commission; to Mr. Abram Bisno, a special agent of the Industrial Commission, for much help in visiting shops and factories; and to Mr. Edward T. Devine, General Secretary of the Charity Organization Society of the City of New York, for access to maps and records of that society. My greatest obligation is to Mr. Henry White, General Secretary of

the United Garment Workers of America, without whose aid the collection of the facts presented concerning women's unions would have been impossible. For the generous co-operation of numerous trade-union officials, and for the considerate attention received from factory superintendents and clothing manufacturers, all of whom it is impossible to name here, I wish also to acknowledge my indebtedness.

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ERRATUM.

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CHAPTER I

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

THE industrial employment of women is no new thing. Under the primitive conditions of savage life women have borne and still bear the major part of the industrial burden. Only the accumulation and diffusion of wealth attendant upon a high civilization can make possible the creation of such a leisure class as is found to-day, probably to a greater extent than ever before, among the women of the middleand higher ranks of society. Yet it is under these modern conditions that there has arisen a peculiar interest in the problems connected with the industrial activity of women. Since the close of the eighteenth century, when the improvements in machinery made it possible for women and children to do much of the work formerly restricted to men, the share of the former in industrial life has received constantly increasing attention. During the first part of the succeeding century public feeling in England was actively aroused by the disclosure of the frightful conditions prevalent among the factory children. But it was not until the discussion of Mr. Sadler's bill for limiting the hours of labor of children and young persons in 1832 that we find any intimation of the recognition of special evils attendant upon the employment of women in factories, and of the distinct problems which women's labor under modern industrial conditions involves. Since that time, however, the subject of the employment of women has proved a

fruitful one for special governmental investigations. So much attention has in fact been given to the relation of women to the factory system that there is danger of underestimating their activity during the preceding periods when other industrial systems prevailed.

There has been no critical study of the industrial position of women in England under the gild system, but there are many interesting and suggestive references to them and to their work, both in the laws of the time and in the gild regulations. According to Lucy Toulmin Smith, "scarcely five out of the five hundred [gilds] were not formed equally of men and women."[1] The charter of the Draper's Company admitted women with full rights, including those of taking apprentices and making ordinances for better government.[2] We find in the Guildhall records that "the office of Plumber of the Bridge was granted to the widow Foster, 1595." The Clock Makers, founded in 1632, had female apprentices sanctioned as late as 1747, while the Grocers' Company gave social recognition to the wives of members, and permitted widows to pay brotherhood money, hold apprentices, trade, and receive all the benefits of the gild.[3] A good part of the industrial provisions concerning women apply to widows, who, it is evident, frequently carried on the business after the death of their husbands. We hear for example of "Widows of London who make great trade in wool and other things, such as Isabella Bucknell and others."[4] It is not uncommon, however, to find such provisions as this: "And when a woman

[1] Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds*, p. xxx.

[2] Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *British Freewomen. Their Historical Privilege*, p. 81.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[4] *Rolls of the Hundreds*, vol. i., pp. 403–404.

coverte de baron follows any craft within the said city by herself apart, with which the husband in no way intermeddles, such woman shall be bound as a single woman as to all that concerns her said craft."[1] She can be imprisoned for debt, and has her duties and penalties as well as her privileges.

It is possible, however, to give undue weight to the industrial independence attained by a few women, and to confuse the membership of women in the gild as a result of its social functions with direct participation in its economic privileges. Women ordinarily became free of the gild not in their own right but as wives or daughters of gild members. It is not uncommon, in spite of the fact that statutes regulating apprenticeship and wages applied ordinarily to men and women alike, to find gild regulations similar to the following: "No one of the trade shall set any woman to work other than his wedded wife and daughter."[2] That the industrial efficiency of wives and daughters, however, quite generally supplemented that of the head of the family is clear. The performance of ordinary household duties by no means exhausted the range of their activity.

It is evident that under the gild system, as at the present time, there was a marked tendency toward the segregation of women workers in particular industries. We hear of "women, that is to say, brewers, bakers, carders, and spinners, and workers as well of wool as of linen cloth and of silk; brawdsters and breakers of wool, and all others that do use and work all handy work,"[3] being especially exempted from certain restrictions. It

[1] "*Liber Albus*," compiled 1419, trans. by Henry T. Riley, p. 181.

[2] *Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth Centuries*. Edited by Henry Thomas Riley, pp. 217, 278 and 547.

[3] *Statutes at Large*, 37 Edward III., c. 6.

is clear that they were at that time practically in control of those industries. Especially in the interests of the silk women were numerous acts passed, such as that forbidding the importation of silk by the Lombards and others, "imagining to destroy the said mystery and all such virtuous occupations of women in the said realm."[1] Such extension of the range of men's activity should not be forgotten or passed over in silence when the present field of women's labor attracts increasing attention and in some quarters arouses alarm. When direct competition between men and women sprang up, the result was usually that women were retained only in the simpler parts of the work, while those in which the development of a high degree of skill was possible, or in which physical strength was an advantage, were taken over by men.

Under the domestic system of industry, which developed with the weakening of the control exercised by the gilds, the division of labor continued much the same. Women and children were still engaged in industrial life, but ordinarily in such a fashion as to supplement the work of the men. There seem to have been few cases where both sexes were engaged in the same branches of work. Defoe, in his classic description of the woolen industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire at the beginning of the eighteenth century, says: "Though we met few People without Doors, yet within we saw the Houses full of lusty Fellows, some at the Dye-vat, some at the Loom, others dressing the cloths; the Women and Children cording or spinning; all employed, from the youngest to the oldest; scarce anything above four years old but its Hands were sufficient for its own Support."[2]

[1] *Statutes at Large*, Henry VI., c. 5.

[2] Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 4th ed., vol. iii, p. 139.

It is generally conceded that women played a greater part in industrial life under the domestic system than in the preceding period, but of the real extent and character of their work we have little information until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Then the increasing introduction of machinery and the extension of the factories caused apprehensions of disaster among the home manufacturers, resulting in an agitation for the revival of the apprenticeship laws and the limitation of looms, and a parliamentary investigation was made into the relative merits of the domestic and of the factory system. The results of this appear in the Report of the Woolen Manufacture of England in 1806. The conditions here reflected may be regarded as fairly typical not only of the woolen trade, but, in a general way, of the other textile industries of that time. The description of the domestic system applies as well to a much earlier period. The report recognizes three systems under which the woolen manufacture is carried on: the domestic, the master clothier, and the factory system. The second of these, the master clothier system, is practically identical with the system under which, as will be shown later, ready-made clothing is still to some extent manufactured in New York. The master clothier was the owner of the raw material, the wool, which was made up sometimes in part in his own home, but more often in the homes of his workmen, where the whole family united in the work. This system differed from the domestic system in that the workmen had ceased to own the material upon which they and their families worked, and had become wage-earners; from the factory system in that the workers were not massed in large establishments by the employer, but the material was given out to be made up wholly or in part in the homes of the people.

In the descriptions of both the domestic and the master clothier system, we find many instances in which the family is treated as a productive unit, as, for example, when a master asserts that he employs "three or four families." Of the division of labor within the family, we get a fairly typical view from the following extracts: "Q. 'Do you employ women to spin?' A. 'Yes.' Q. 'A man who has a wife may have her assistance to spin?' A. 'Yes; and some of them warp and web, and the children fetch the bobbins, and so on; there are a great many things a family may assist in.' Q. 'With respect to dyeing the wool, the buying, the putting it in, and weaving it, those things must be done by persons who have skill, but the rest may be done by the various descriptions of persons in the family?' A. 'Yes.'"[1]

"Q. 'Has she [your wife] often rendered you assistance . . . ?' A. 'Yes; she was always brought up to it.' Q. 'Is that a general practice in your part of the country?' A. 'Yes.' Q. 'Is it common for people's daughters to assist them likewise?' A. 'In our part of the country when a man has a family, whether they be boys or girls, as soon as they get big enough they put them to it.' Q. 'Are the girls or women apprenticed to it?' A. 'That is according to whether they have got parents to look over them or not. If they have their fathers to teach them, there is no occasion of any apprenticeship. . . . I do not think it is a general practice; there are some that are, . . . and some that get into it without.'"[2]

Spinning, however, was an occupation by no means confined to the families of weavers. It was also a com-

[1] *Report of the Woolen Manufacture of England, Parliamentary Papers, 1806*, p. 6.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

mon by-employment of the wives and daughters of rural laborers, and served to increase appreciably the family earnings.

We find then that while women were actively employed in industry, it was in a supplementary fashion, in the simpler, less skilled branches, and that it was only in rare cases that they received such systematic and prolonged training as was necessary to enable them to purchase, dye, and weave wool. All of this knowledge was necessary for the domestic master manufacturer.

Under the old hand loom system there is no trace of a difference in the rate of payment of women as compared with men. The question apparently did not arise. When the women did weaving it was generally of an inferior class of work, for which they were paid at the same rate as the old men and the boys with whom they came into competition. In case the husband or father was himself the owner of the product, there was no question of definite wages. When, on the other hand, the family worked for a master, there was either no separation in wages, or the wages of the women were drawn by the husband or father. Of the position of widows there is less definite information than under the gild system. One young man describes himself as "not exactly a master clothier, but carrying on the business in my mother's name."[1] No record was made of the financial arrangements in this case. There is no indication of the existence of any considerable number of women with training sufficient to enable them actively to conduct the business after the death of their husbands.

It is difficult to state with exactness the effect of the introduction of machinery and the factory system upon

[1] *Report of the Woolen Manufacture of England, Parliamentary Papers, 1806*, p. 67.

the number of women in industry, since definite statistical material for the preceding period is lacking. In so far as the processes to which the new inventions of the close of the eighteenth century were applied were those that had formerly been in the hands of women, the result was probably a diminution in the actual number of women engaged. Of the two chief processes in the textile industry, spinning and weaving, the former, which had been peculiarly the occupation of women, was the first to be revolutionized by new methods. The invention of the spinning jenny and of the mule made possible the production of a fine thread at low cost. Machine spinning rapidly superseded hand-work, and the number of women employed was at least temporarily much reduced. The effect was widely felt. Where spinning had served as a by-employment, as had been the case among the rural population, the women could not follow their work to the factory, and for large numbers of them there was no other employment. In the case of those families in which all the members had been cloth workers, partial compensation for the loss in spinning was made by temporary increase in the wages of weavers. Mobile female labor that could readily be concentrated in the mill towns found employment here, but the demand for women's work even here was less than might have been expected, owing to the fact that the opportunities for utilizing the labor of children had been greatly increased. In general, the reports unite in calling attention rather to the withdrawal of work from large numbers of women, than to their extended opportunities.

On the other hand, further inventions tended to open up to women work that had previously been performed in the main by men. The factories established for the weaving of woolen goods employed almost exclusively

ls. The ability of the women to perform this work power looms was not, however, the only reason for ir employment. Domestic weaving still continued. ıile the girls manifested a preference for factory life, ce it freed them from the restraints of home, the boys ored the domestic loom. To them it offered an portunity for learning the trade, with the hope of vancement and of greater ultimate liberty. The same luence can be seen working to-day in favor of the all shop in the clothing trade in New York, whose uggle with its rival, the factory, is but a repetition of s earlier conflict. Under such circumstances there is, art from the question of relative wages, a distinct ıdency toward the grouping of girls in factories, and men in small shops. As long as the domestic loom ntended against the power loom we find, however, ıong the mill workers, comparatively few married ɔmen, since the mill girls on marrying weavers found at if allowance were made for the value of their ser-ɛes as housekeepers, they could be as profitably em-ɔyed in working at home as at the mill.[1]

The typical effects upon the employment of women of e introduction of machinery into a given industry may said then to be two-fold. In so far as the new achine performs mechanically simple operations pre-ɔusly performed by the hand labor of women, there is decrease in the number of women demanded by the dustry. In so far as the new machine reduces the nount of physical strength or of skill required in spe-ific processes, it tends to further the substitution of omen for men in that industry. The relative impor-

[1] Miss Clara Collet, *Report on Changes in the Employment of Women d Girls in Industrial Centres*, issued by *Board of Trade*, *C. 8794*, 19.

tance of these two movements, the displacement of women by machinery, and the displacement of men by machinery and women, would naturally vary in different industries.

There are additional facts whose influence must be taken into account in order to realize the full effect of the modern industrial system upon the relative employment of men and women. Quite apart from the effect of machinery in reducing the amount of human labor necessary to perform a given piece of work, and even apart from the effect of division of labor, a woman factory hand accomplishes more work on the average than a woman employed at home—that is, the domestic system makes possible and probable the diffusion of work among a large body of women who are devoting only part of their time to it. Under the definite hours and systematic regulation of the factory, the same work would be accomplished by half the number of people, fully employed. There is under the factory system a concentration of work in the hands of those who can submit themselves wholly to its exigencies; under the domestic system, a diffusion among those who are partly employed in other ways. This tendency toward concentration works, in conjunction with the displacement of female labor by mechanical processes, to reduce still further the number of women required.

The second factor to be considered tends to counteract the effect of the displacement by machinery and the concentration of work. So far the assumption has been that the amount of product in the given industry remains stationary under the changed conditions. But this is rarely the case. The cheapening of the cost of production results normally in a lower price and an increased demand for the commodity. As the product is increased,

ture must grow larger. Whether this increase will be sufficiently great in itself to offset entirely the influences making for reduction will depend upon the elasticity of the demand for the given article. In any case the effect of this increase will of course be felt in those branches of the industry still employing men, just as it is in the women's work, and will not affect the relative extent of their employment.

Up to this point we have considered the effects of the introduction of machinery and of the factory system into a single industry, and that an industry in which women's labor has a share. No influence has been noted in it that tended toward the replacement of women by men; several have been indicated, the balance between which might result either in an increase or a decrease in the number of women employed; but the reduction, when that occurred, would be compensated for by the work of machines or of children, rather than of men. If progressive methods were to be introduced into such an industry alone, there might be fair ground for the complaint that there was an increasing tendency toward the transference of the burdens of industrial life from the shoulders of those best able to bear them. But such industries do not stand alone. The inventive genius that has made possible such alterations in the conditions of labor in one industry, has been applied elsewhere with remarkable results. The vast expansion of industry characteristic of the last century has often occurred along lines with which women have had little to do. The enormous growth of the coal, iron, and steel trades are cases in point. As machinery has come to take the place of part of the work of women, and as women have found increased opportunities through mechanical inventions for entering upon pursuits formerly restricted to

men, so through the further aid of mechanical inventions there have opened up new opportunities for men. There has been a leveling up all along the line. That this has occurred uniformly there is no reason to suppose. There has been pressure first at one point and then at another, and much suffering has been undergone during the process of adjustment to new conditions. But that economic expansion along the new lines would have been greatly retarded if there had been no substitution for man's work in the old branches, we have no reason to doubt.

That the establishment of the factory system has resulted in an increase either in the number of women industrially employed, or in the share of the industrial burden borne by women, it would be difficult to prove. The factors in the problem are too complicated for an *à priori* judgment to carry great weight, and the absence of statistical material for the earlier period makes a full comparison impossible. It might be supposed that the fact that household cares formerly absorbed a greater part of women's time would of itself prove conclusively that they participated less in remunerative employments. Unless we are willing to assume, however, that the amount of leisure time has not increased among the women of the laboring classes, this argument would not be decisive. The government investigations of the first half of the nineteenth century repeatedly called attention to the large number of women scattered throughout the country who suffered from the withdrawal of work. On the other hand, the concentration of women workers in factory towns made more prominent their share in industry, and the numerous instances in which their work came to supersede that of men helped to create the popular impression that their industrial importance was increasing.

Of the present tendency of women's employment in England, the investigations of Miss Clara Collet afford an interesting study. In 1881 the women wage-earners constituted 34.05 per cent. of the females over ten years of age; in 1891, 34.42 per cent.[1] As the increase is less than 4 per 1000, we may say that the proportion of women wage-earners has remained practically stationary. Miss Collet's analysis of the English situation is extremely suggestive, and may profitably be kept in mind when the conditions in this country are under consideration. She distinguishes a twofold movement among women:

First, a tendency on the part of women of the upper middle class to engage in remunerative labor. The impression made on the popular mind by this movement has been wholly out of proportion to the comparatively small number of women affected.

Second, a contrary movement on the part of women of the laboring classes away from employment outside the home, wherever the economic situation of the family makes this possible. Comparing the practically stationary number of women wage-earners in the country at large with the increase of middle-class women employed, she reaches the conclusion that this increase must have been counterbalanced by an actual decrease in the employment of women of the laboring classes, made possible by the increasing prosperity of that class. This conclusion, however, is one that will doubtless not be permitted to pass undisputed.

The history of the industrial employment of women in the United States is much simpler than that of England.

[1] Miss Clara Collet, *Report on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls*, issued by the *Board of Trade*, *C. 7564*, p. 72. Statistics for 1901 are unfortunately not yet available.

Up to the time of the Revolution there were practically no women wage-earners save in domestic service. We hear of the occasional widow who assumed the management of the business left by her husband, and of the single woman who acted as village dressmaker. A few women, it is true, found time in the home to earn money by the spinning and weaving of wool and linen, by the growing and weaving of silk, by knitting, or by the making of articles of clothing and embroideries that they sent out in vessels engaged in the exportation of fish. But for the most part even exceptional energy found place for itself in supplying the numerous requirements of the household, in spinning and weaving the cloth, in dyeing and dressing it, in making it up into garments, and in the manifold activities of baking, brewing and house-cleaning.

The history of women's work outside the home in this country may fairly be said to begin with the rise of the cotton industry at the close of the eighteenth century. The rapid growth of the New England factory towns during the first half of the nineteenth century drew increasing attention to the problems connected with women's labor, and to this interest the influx of women into general industrial life at the time of the Civil War added not a little. The United States census for 1860 gives the first definite statements as to the occupations of women and children, and since the publication of the first report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1870 there have been numerous governmental investigations of the various phases of the subject.

The changes here in the nature of women's activities have been such as are characteristic of the transition period in which a new country with undeveloped manufactures and a practically isolated family economy is passing into

a nation with organized industry. Under such conditions there will be for a time a rapid increase in the number of wage-earning women, the body being recruited from the mass of those for whom in the past opportunity for such work had alone been lacking, or of those freed from domestic labor through the withdrawal of certain industries from the homes. There comes a time when the process of adjustment to this fundamental change is complete, and any further accession to the ranks of women workers must be explained on other grounds, either social or economic, such as a change in the interests and standards of women, a lowered marriage rate, a decrease in the wages for male labor, and the like. The situation differs markedly in various parts of the country, since certain of the western states are still in the transition stage, while the conditions in New England approximate more nearly to those of countries industrially old.

The Census figures for 1880 and 1890 seem to show an increase in the total number of women in gainful occupations. In 1880 14.69 per cent. of females over 10 years of age were engaged in some gainful occupation, while ten years later the proportion had risen to 16.97 per cent.[1] Of these the greatest share, 1,667,698, were domestic servants. Manufactures ranked next with 1,027,242, then agriculture claimed 679,523, and professional services and trade and transportation completed the list, with respectively 311,687 and 228,421 employees.[2] With the groups other than those engaged in manufactures we have here nothing to do.

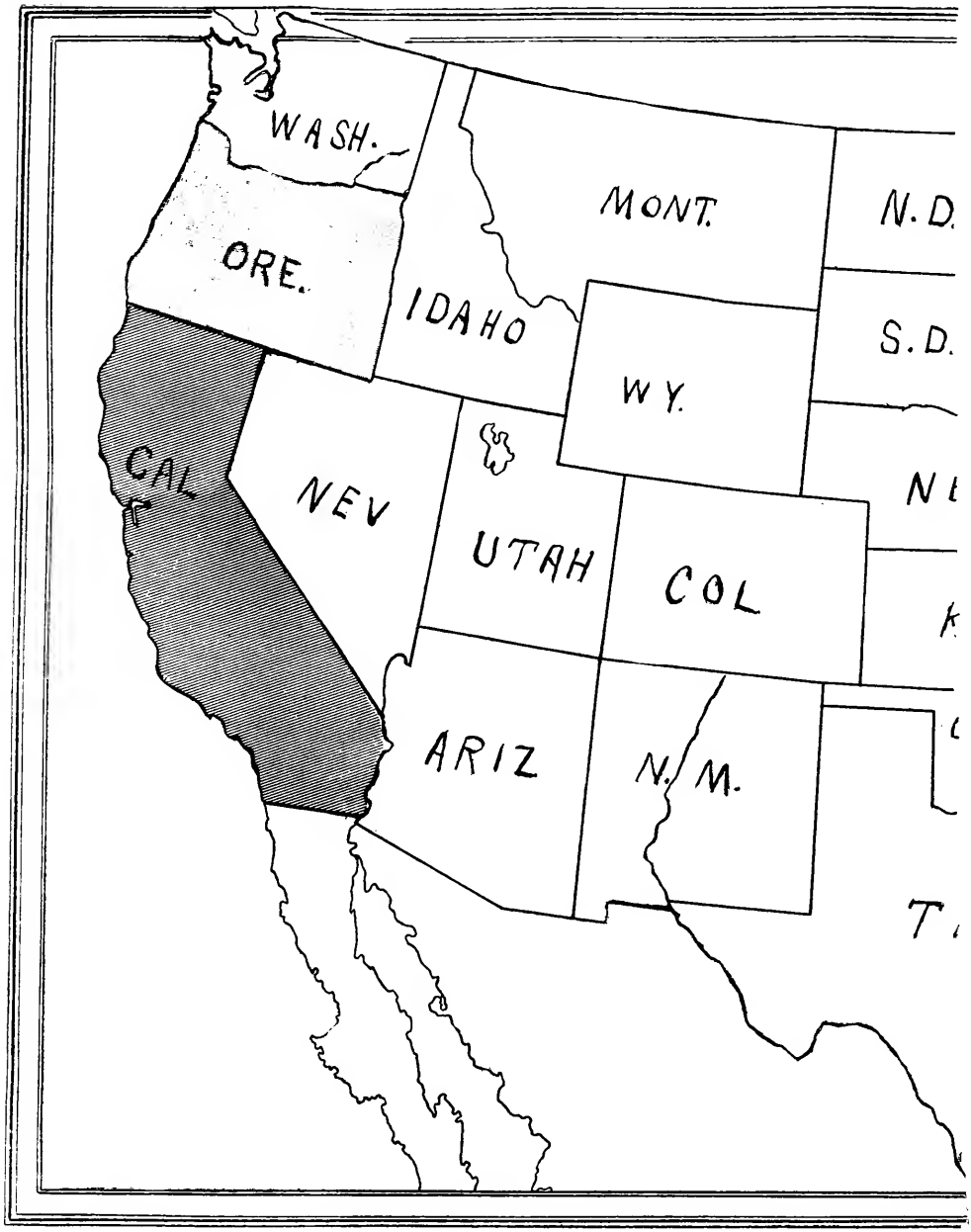
For more exact information concerning the women in

[1] Report on *Population, United States Census, 1890*, part ii, p. lxxx.

[2] *Ibid.*, part ii, p. lxxxviii. Occupation statistics of the Census for 1900 are not yet available.

the various manufacturing industries and their distribution, reference must be made to the special reports on manufactures, which furnish the numbers used as a basis for the following maps and tables. Map A indicates the distribution of women engaged in manufactures in 1900 throughout the different states. On the basis of the extent to which the industrial employment of women has been carried, it is evident that the country may be roughly divided into three sections. The first, including those states north of the Potomac and east of Ohio, is primarily the region of women's industrial activity. The textile factories and the boot and shoe trade of New England, the clothing trade and the varied industries of New York and Pennsylvania, the silk mills of New Jersey, and the canning factories of Maryland, all contribute their quota to the result. Adjoining this territory is the second section, which extends westward through Minnesota and Missouri, and south to Georgia. This is a region in which some industries employing women flourish, especially in the large cities of Illinois and Ohio, but the number of women workers bears a much smaller proportion to the whole number of women than in the former group. The line between this section and the rest of the country, in which the proportion of women is so small as to be unrepresented on the map, is by no means as sharp and clear as it appears. The leading industries of West Virginia are not such as to make the general employment of women possible, but Kentucky and Georgia rank only slightly below some of the states in the shaded groups. It is evident, however, that in spite of the general progress of manufactures in the South, of which so much is heard, the proportion of the whole number of women employed in that work is still very low there. The third section referred to includes

SHOWING THE PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL FEMALE POPULATION OF THE DIF



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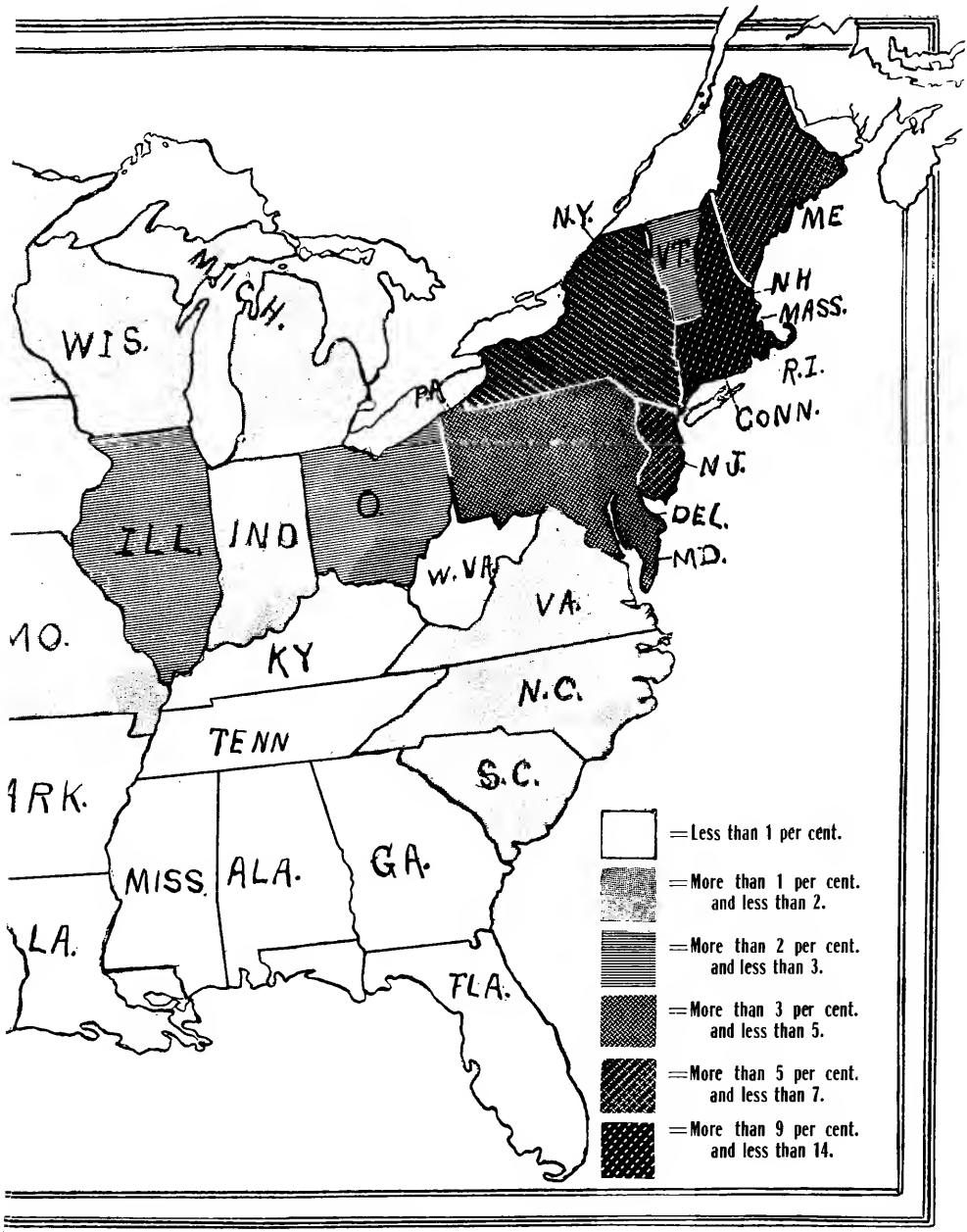
D AMONG THE WOMEN WAGE-EARNERS EMPLOYED IN MANUFACTURES IN 1890.



ee Table A, the third column of figures.

the rest of the country, with the exception of two states, Oregon and California. The limited development of manufactures in this section affords women but few opportunities for employment. Oregon forms an apparent rather than real exception, since its women wage-earners in manufactures embrace only 1.01 per cent. of the population — the lowest percentage to be found among the states in the shaded areas. With California the situation is very different. The industrial employment of women is here to be explained partly by the existence of cities, where women make dresses, men's clothing, shirts, hats, etc. A more important reason, however, for the large number in California in comparison with the remaining western states is to be found in the extent to which the canning and preserving of fruits is there carried on. This work occupies the time of about one-third of the women employed in manufactures in California.[1]

The table on the next page presents the figures used as a basis for Map A, and other figures which make possible some generalizations as to the present trend in the different states in regard to the employment of women:

[1] For the industries of the various states, see *Bulletins on Manufactures, Twelfth Census of the United States.*

TABLE A.

Women Wage-Earners Employed in the Manufacturing Industries in the United States.[1]

State.	Number of Women Wage-Earners in Manufactures.		Percentage of Total Female Population.		Increase in Percentage.
	1900.	1890.	1900.	1890.	
Rhode Island	29,269	25,602	13.42	14.43	*1.01
New Hampshire	21,921	20,933	10.63	11.02	*0.39
Massachusetts	143,109	133,452	9.95	11.51	*1.56
Connecticut	42,605	36,111	9.38	9.32	0.06
New York	230,199	194,350	6.30	6.43	*0.13
Maine	18,913	21,051	5.51	6.41	*0.90
New Jersey	51,661	37,095	5.48	5.12	0.36
Maryland	29,617	26,432	4.95	5.02	*0.07
Pennsylvania	126,093	87,035	4.07	3.36	0.71
Delaware	3,579	2,890	3.95	3.49	0.46
District of Columbia	4,162	3,159	2.84	2.61	0.23
Vermont	4,478	2,745	2.66	1.68	0.98
Ohio	53,711	41,531	2.61	2.28	0.33
California	17,285	11,774	2.60	2.32	0.28
Illinois	58,978	32,910	2.51	1.77	0.74
Michigan	23,092	12,857	1.97	1.28	0.69
North Carolina	15,644	6,227	1.64	0.76	0.88
Wisconsin	16,266	12,751	1.62	1.57	0.05
Missouri	23,683	18,294	1.57	1.41	0.16
Indiana	19,266	12,315	1.55	1.14	0.41
South Carolina	9,752	3,775	1.44	0.65	0.79
Virginia	12,197	9,655	1.31	1.16	0.15
Minnesota	9,553	5,508	1.17	0.91	0.26
Oregon	1,821	806	1.01	0.61	0.40
Georgia	10,929	5,998	0.91	0.65	0.26
Kentucky	9,174	8,280	0.87	0.90	*0.03
Louisiana	5,448	6,798	0.79	1.22	*0.43
Colorado	1,894	1,223	0.78	0.73	0.05
Iowa	8,248	5,183	0.77	0.57	0.20
West Virginia	3,349	1,455	0.73	0.39	0.34
Florida	1,668	1,312	0.61	0.69	*0.08
Utah	818	485	0.61	0.50	0.11
Tennessee	5,810	3,273	0.58	0.37	0.21
Washington	1,216	483	0.57	0.37	0.20
Nebraska	2,626	1,473	0.52	0.30	0.22
Kansas	3,162	2,510	0.45	0.37	0.08
Alabama	3,898	1,864	0.43	0.25	0.18
Montana	287	75	0.31	0.17	0.14
Mississippi	1,726	1,236	0.22	0.19	0.03
Texas	2,913	1,977	0.20	0.19	0.01
North Dakota	193	85	0.14	0.10	0.04
Wyoming	47	60	0.14	0.28	*0.14
South Dakota	231	129	0.12	0.09	0.03
Arkansas	700	463	0.11	0.09	0.02
Nevada	18	14	0.11	0.09	0.02
Idaho	59	21	0.09	0.06	0.03
Arizona	42	9	0.08	0.04	0.04
New Mexico	72	16	0.08	0.02	0.06
Oklahoma	140	3	0.08	0.01	0.07
United States	1,031,522	803,683	2.79	2.63	0.16

[1] The figures showing the number of women wage-earners in manufactures in 1900 and in 1890 are those of *Bulletin no. 150, Twelfth Census of the United States*, pp. 10–13. The percentages in the two succeeding columns were then computed by using as base the figures for the female population of the different states, as given in the Eleventh and Twelfth Censuses.

*Decrease.

A study of this table leads us to the following conclusions concerning women wage-earners in manufactures:

I. Not only has the absolute number of women employed in manufactures increased in the ten years between 1890 and 1900, but it has increased at a more rapid rate than has the female population.

II. While in those states in which a large proportion of women wage-earners is found the absolute number of women employed in manufactures has increased (except in Maine), this increase has in general not kept pace with the increase in the female population.

III. In those states in which a small percentage of women is employed in manufactures, their number has increased both absolutely and in relation to the female population.

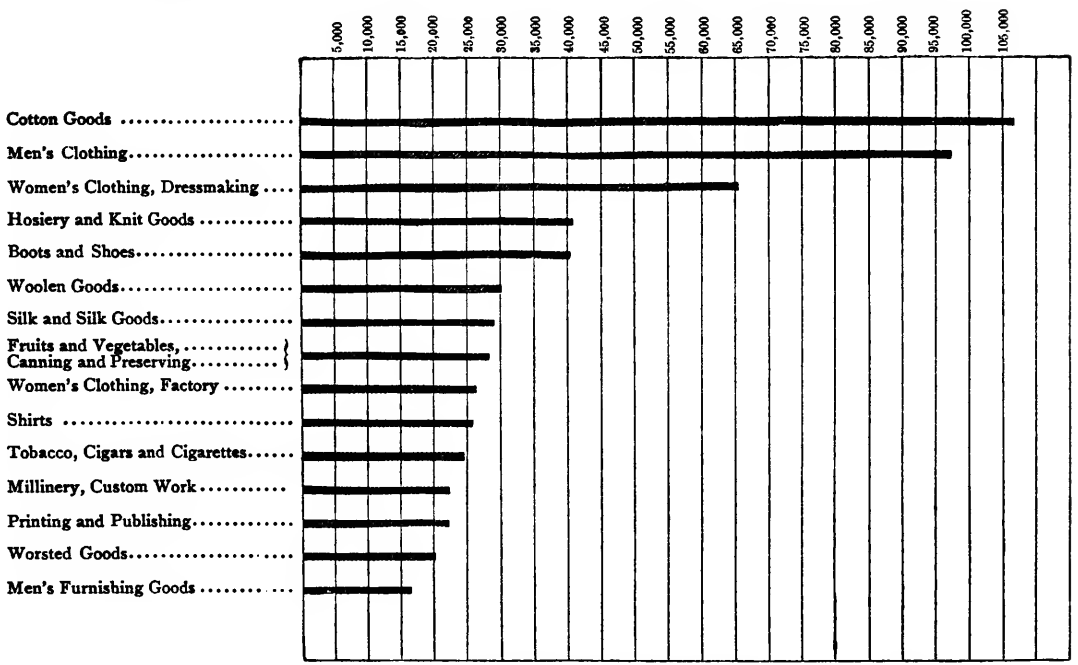
IV The states in which the largest absolute number of women is employed are by no means the same as those in which the largest proportion of women is employed.

Diagram A shows the distribution of women in those industries in the United States that in 1890 employed more than 15,000 women. It brings out clearly the great concentration of women in a few lines of work. Two general groups of work are especially prominent, the textile trades and the sewing trades. Of the total number of women in manufactures, as presented by the Report of 1890, the former group, including the cotton, woolen, silk, and worsted industries, employed nearly 22 per cent., while the sewing trades, embracing the manufacture of men's clothing, women's clothing, shirts, and men's furnishing goods, gave employment to over 27 per cent. These two great groups together represented 49 per cent. of the whole number of women in manufactures,

that is, over 400,000 women. Manifestly the conditions surrounding employment in these lines of work are worthy of careful study. Over the textile trades the factory system has established its control, but the sewing trades are still pursued under the most varied conditions, in homes, in shops, or in factories. It is the most important industry in this group, the manufacture of men's ready-made clothing, that we shall consider in the following pages, an industry which employs more women than any other except the cotton trade, and one which in the variety of conditions that it presents is second to none.

DIAGRAM A.

SHOWING THE ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN 1890 IN THE 15 MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES EMPLOYING THE LARGEST NUMBER OF WOMEN.



The figures on which this diagram is based are obtained from the *Report on the Manufacturing Industries, Census of the United States*, 1890, Part I, pp. 73–84.

CHAPTER II

THE CLOTHING TRADE

MEN'S clothing belongs in general to two broad classes. It may be either *custom-made*, that is, made to the measure of the purchaser and fitted to him, or it may be *ready-made*, that is, cut in stock sizes and made up without reference to the individual requirements of the future wearer. These branches of the clothing trade are quite distinct. The work is made up under different conditions, custom tailors now rarely pass into the ranks of the workers on ready-made goods, and the two groups of workmen have separate labor organizations. In order to reduce as far as possible the introduction of technicalities of the trade, I have confined this investigation to one branch of the industry; and owing to the large number of women employed and the varied conditions under which the work is pursued, I have chosen that of ready-made clothing.

Map B indicates the present distribution of the ready-made clothing trade in this country. From this it is clear that while the industry is widely scattered, being found to some extent in thirty different states, its extensive development has been confined to half a dozen states. The concentration would be still more marked if the distribution of the industry were shown by cities, for it is here that the trade largely flourishes.[1] New York,

[1] The material for this purpose will be available shortly in the completed reports on *Manufactures*, in the *Twelfth Census*.

Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and St. Louis are responsible for the large numbers of employees in this industry attributed to their respective states. Boston no longer holds the prominent place that it formerly claimed, and Massachusetts has little more than half the number of workmen found in Missouri, the state ranking next above it.

The following table shows more in detail the position of the leading states in this industry:

TABLE B.

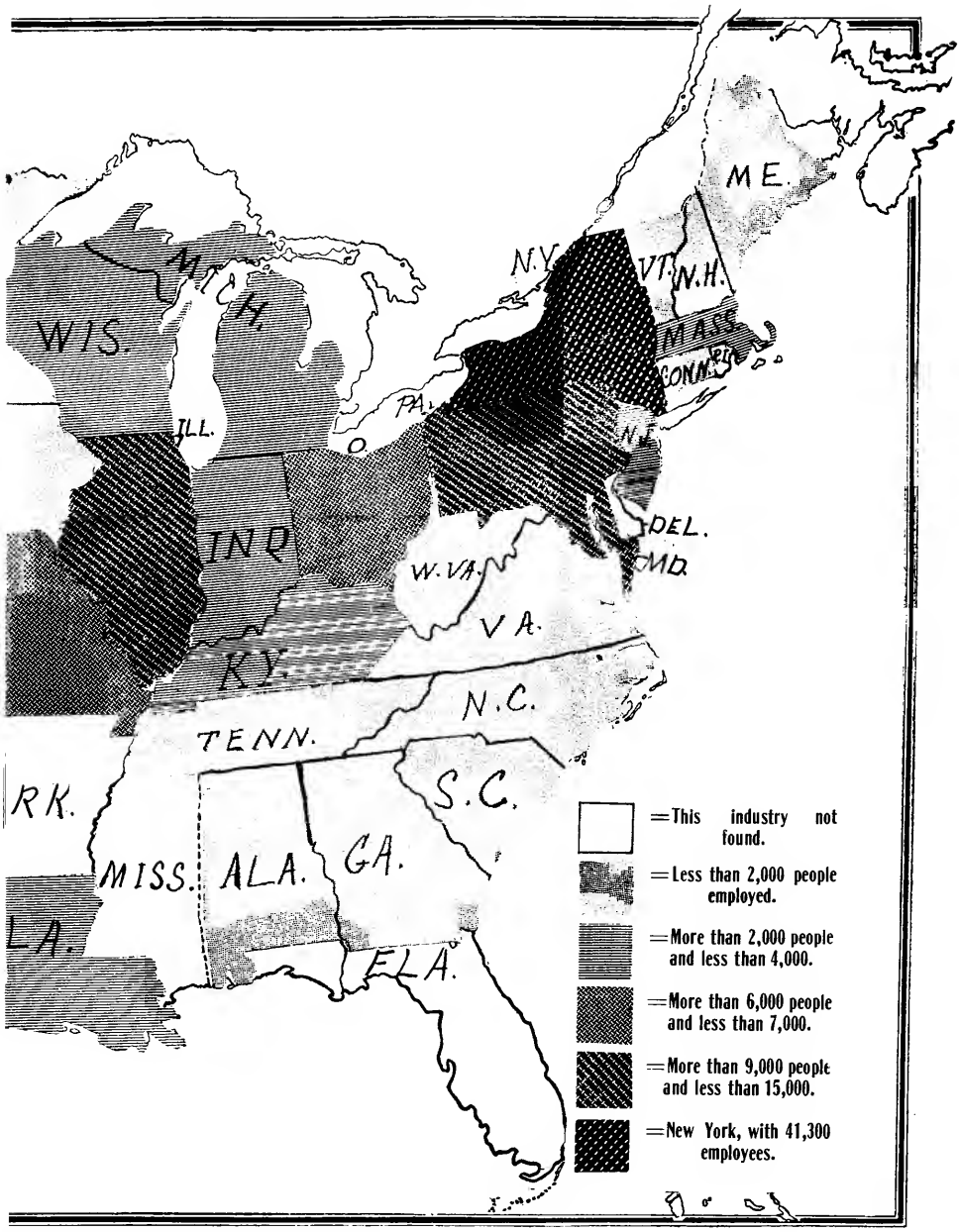
MEN'S CLOTHING, FACTORY PRODUCT.[1]

Total number of employees in the United States	120,110
New York	41,300
Illinois	14,977
Pennsylvania	10,497
Maryland	9,725
Ohio	6,521
Missouri	6,129
Total for these states	89,149

Seventy-four per cent., therefore, of the whole number of employes in this industry is found in these six states, and New York alone supplies over 34 per cent. of the total. Although Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Binghamton and Newburg are all to some extent engaged in the clothing industry, the great body of workmen in this state is found in New York City. Indeed it is a common saying in the trade that half the ready-made clothing in the United States is manufactured in the city of New

[1] This table is compiled from the *Bulletins on Manufactures, Twelfth Census*, and from advance reports kindly sent from the Census Office in Washington. It is possible, therefore, the figures as here given may not correspond exactly with those which will appear later in the Census reports, as they are subject to revision. They are, however, substantially correct.

The figures used are from the *Bulle*



Twelfth Census of the United States

York. While this may not be strictly true, of New York in the clothing trade is so wi predominant position is so generally recogniz power is so manifestly increasing, that it ha desirable in the present instance to confine my in tion to that city. Except, therefore, where it pressly stated otherwise, all observations and conclu in the following study apply to the city of New York

Notwithstanding the large number of people now e gaged in the manufacture of men's ready-made clothing it is a comparatively young industry. Its history in this country is confined to the last sixty years. As early as 1840 the English, Scotch and American journeymen tailors in New York in the dull season of the custom trade made up coats, either at their own homes or at the shop, for about half the price charged for a coat made to order. In this work there was no division of labor, the entire coat being made by one man. During the succeeding decade some of the Irish, who were at that time entering the country in swarms, took up tailoring, and in the back shop of the merchant tailor worked on ready-made clothing between seasons, but with no change from previous methods. By 1850, however, some Germans had entered the clothing trade, and it is to these, coming from a land of home industries, that we trace the introduction of the first division of labor. The German tailor took coats, vests, and pants to his home, and was there assisted by his wife and daughters, the work being roughly divided into machine sewing, basting and finishing. The family home shop in the clothing trade, appearing among the Germans at that time, is peculiar to the German people. At the present time its direct successor is to be found in the small pants and vest shops in Brooklyn, now located outside the home how-

h the husband, wife, and two or three sons
ers, form the nucleus of the workers, among
to be numbered perhaps three or four em-
This form of organization is to be found in
ork among people of no other nationality.

il the close of the Civil War the amount of ready-
clothing manufactured was not extensive, nor was
f fine quality. The bulk of it was of cheap goods,
l was used by sailors, miners, or plantation hands.
hortly after the war, however, the business increased, and the grade of goods was improved. The better class of work was at this time done chiefly in the German houses. About 1873 the Hungarian, German and Austrian Jews began coming to this country. Among them were some tailors, and they introduced the next innovation, that of men working exclusively as sewing machine operators. At first the Jews were employed by the Germans, but soon became contractors themselves. Their numbers were greatly increased by the influx of Russian and Polish Jews, and competition in the trade became fierce. By 1890 the Jews had virtually gained control of the clothing industry in New York, a control that they have succeeded in maintaining to the present time.[1]

There is a large number of shops in the clothing trade that are difficult to describe because of the lack of positive characteristics. They differ from the family shop in that the skilled machine operator, and not the family, is the nucleus of the shop organization; and from the task system in that there is no team work and that wages are frequently paid by the week. The term fac-

[1] For the general facts concerning the influence of the people of different nationalities upon the historical development of the clothing trade, see the *Report of the Industrial Commission*, vol. xv, p. 324.

tory[1] could indeed be used of one of these shops, but it seems convenient to restrict that term to the large establishments employing fifty or more workmen, in which a considerable degree of division of labor is observed, and in which machine power is used. These form a fairly distinct class, to which the term factory would naturally be applied in common speech, and a class of growing importance. The shops which we have in mind, however, employ usually from 15 to 50 men and women, who work chiefly by the week, and are employed at not more than 6 or 8 different kinds of work. Such shops may be regarded as belonging to a transition stage between the old home shop and the modern factory. Individual establishments have passed from this stage into the factory stage by a reorganization of the working system, in some cases brought about chiefly by increase in size. Such shops may for convenience be called transition shops. To the Jews is to be attributed the introduction into New York of these shops, in which the skilled operator, capable of developing a high degree of speed in his work, held the chief place.

In one branch of the clothing industry, that of coat making, a more highly specialized organization was developed than in the others, a form of organization as characteristic of the Jew as is the family shop of the German, and one that is a far more efficient instrument

[1] From the legal point of view the significance of the term "factory" has varied greatly with the time and place. According to the New York State laws, it is now "construed to include also any mill, workshop or other manufacturing establishment where one or more persons are employed at labor." *New York State Laws of 1897*, ch. 415, § 2. Where, however, a distinction is to be drawn between the different classes of manufacturing establishments, it seems legitimate to restrict the application of the word more nearly in accordance with its earlier meaning, as has been done in the text.

of production. I refer to the so-called "task" system. This system appeared first in New York between 1876 and 1882, among the Jewish coat makers, and is found in no other American city. Under the task system the work of making a coat is divided among three men, known as a "team" or "set," one of whom does the basting, another the machine work or "operating," and the third the "edge-basting" or finishing. In the beginning the men were paid nominally by the week, the wages of the operator being $18, of the baster $16, and of the edge-baster, a girl, $7 to $9; but these wages were in reality piece wages, since a day's wages were secured, not by working for a stated period of time, but by the completion of a certain amount of work, the "task" set. At first this task consisted of 8 or 10 coats, and was readily completed in a day. Some men even earned 7 or 8 days wages in the 6 day working week. Under the task system however the reduction of real wages proved singularly easy, since it could be brought about without changing the nominal return to the workman by merely increasing the amount of the task. The average workman will actively resist a reduction of wages or a definite increase in the hours of labor, when he will make less objection to an increase in the amount of work to be done for the stated wage, if the work can be accomplished in nearly the usual time. Intensity of effort is less tangible and is less easily measured than money price or labor time. So the task was increased from 8 or 9 to 10 coats, to 11, and so on, until now a "day's work" in these shops means usually the completion by the team of 20 coats, and sometimes even more. This increase in the size of the task was inevitably accompanied by an increase in the hours of labor, but the hours in such shops have always been variable and the increase has

come gradually. Now, however, in 6 working days of 12 or 13 hours, it is rare that a team of men can make more than 4½ or 5 tasks, consequently they receive wages for only 4½ or 5 days' work. The wages, it is evident then, are in reality paid at piece rates, but the pretense of a standard weekly payment is maintained. The contractor always claims that he would not ask the men to work for lower wages—he demands only that they shall make one more coat a day.

Not only does the fact that wages are paid at substantially piece rates serve as an incentive to rapid work, but the division of work among the members of the team has a similar influence. The most rapid worker spurs on his companions. Especially has this been the case where the contractor himself has worked as a member of the team, an arrangement formerly quite common.

Under the task system the labor of the team is supplemented by that of several other workers. There is the presser, whose duties are indicated by his name, the girl to sew on buttons and tack pockets, and the girl who fells the armholes and the bottoms of the coats. The contractor himself has a general oversight of the work done, trimming the parts after the lining has been fastened to the outside, and re-shaping the coat if necessary.

The success of the task system in New York in driving out the journeyman tailor from the manufacture of ready-made coats in all but a few establishments (where he continues to find employment on the best grade of work), and in almost entirely displacing the German home shops in the same branch of the trade, was due to two causes. The first was its introduction of a more definite division of labor, which resulted in the development of workmen each skilled in a single branch of work. The

second was the incentive that it offered to greater intensity of effort. The conflict, moreover, was one not merely between different systems of work, but also between different races. The importance of the racial factor in determining the result must not be overlooked. The Jewish tailor is quick, alert, and above all ambitious to rise from the grade of laborer to that of a controller of labor. To open a small contractor's shop, for which a capital of $50 is said to be sufficient, has been his great desire, and with this object in view the Jewish coat-maker will work with tireless energy.

As we have said, the Jews had by 1890 secured control of the New York ready-made clothing industry, but about that time certain sections of the work began to pass into the hands of the Italians. Their numbers have steadily increased until now hardly a clothing shop can be found in New York, whether Jewish, German, Lithuanian, or Irish and American, for which the felling is not done by Italian women, while the men are in some cases employed as operators. The introduction of the Italian women has come about for reasons very different from those responsible for the entrance of the Jews. If the wages of the latter are compared with those of the Germans or Lithuanians doing the same class of work here, it will be found that the weekly earnings of the Jews are relatively high; but their piece wages are low, and their employment is therefore profitable to the contractor. The Italian woman, however, holds her own against all other finishers, not because she works faster, and so earns as much at lower piece rates, but because she does the same amount of work for lower wages. She is content to receive less, and consequently has secured a complete monopoly of part of the work, the felling and finishing of ready-made clothing.

An increasingly large place has been made for this class of relatively unskilled labor by the growth of the factory system. This gained a foothold in New York six or seven years ago, and is now pushing hard the task system and the small shop. The large shop, in which usually from 50 to 200 men and women are employed, among whom the work is minutely subdivided, was practically unknown here in the clothing trade until some time after it had been introduced in other American cities, and this method of working is still frequently referred to by contractors here as the "Boston system." The factory, with its minute subdivision of labor, possesses two advantages in the clothing trade that are commonly associated with it, namely, increased skill and speed through concentration of effort, and gain through the substitution of less skilled labor in the simpler operations. The development of high skill in certain branches in some cases makes it possible entirely to do without parts of the work formerly necessary, and so to effect an additional saving. Increase in output owing to the use of mechanical power, which is often largely instrumental in the growth of factories, plays in this case a less important part. The advantages offered have in New York been partly offset by three facts: First, that the hours of labor in the factory are limited, while those in the small shop can be indefinitely increased; second, that the factory system presents fewer opportunities for the "driving" or "speeding up" of the men than does the ingenious task system; and third, that the factory is in many cases less popular with the Jewish workman. Working in the small shop has often proved to the Jew the readiest means of starting in business for himself, and even when this proves impossible, he sometimes prefers the general independence which he can

maintain in the small shop, the freedom to come and go when he will and to work early and late, to the more closely regulated life in the factory. The Jew is first and last an individualist, impatient of control.

It is apparently for these reasons that the clothing factories have been established slowly in New York, and in spite of their manifest advantages have by no means driven out the small shops. The exhaustive study of the relative cost of manufacturing clothing by various methods, made in a report prepared under the direction of the Industrial Commission, indicates clearly the superior competing power in this trade of the factory system. This power, it is also plainly recognized, would be materially increased if the task shops were restricted to the same hours of labor as are observed in the factories.[1]

We find at the present time, then, that ready-made clothing is manufactured in New York under four sets of conditions; it may be made in the small family shop, in the transition shop, under the task system, or in the factory. It might be mentioned in passing that a few establishments still give out garments of the most expensive ready-made class to be wholly put together by the single skilled tailor, but so small a percentage of the work is done in this way that we shall not consider it further. The lines between these different methods of manufacture are not always as clear as in the typical cases that we have considered, nor are the conditions precisely the same in the making of different articles. For example, a pair of pants made in what we would call a factory, may embody the work of no more people than a coat manufactured in a home shop, for the work on the former is less capable of subdivision than is the work on the latter—yet in practice there is usually little

[1] *Report of the Industrial Commission*, vol. xv, p. 351.

difficulty in distinguishing between these four types of manufacture.

While there are some establishments in which complete suits of clothing are made, shops in general confine themselves to the manufacture of one or at most two parts. We find, moreover, marked difference in the organization of shops, according to the articles of clothing made in them. It is claimed that half the ready-made coats manufactured in New York are still made under the task system.[1] The typical task shop for the making of coats employs three teams (each composed of operator, baster, and edge-baster), two pressers (paid either by the piece or week), one girl for sewing on buttons and tacking pockets (paid by the week), and six women, who at home fell the armholes and buttons of the coats and receive piece wages. The places of the latter may be taken by three girls working in the shop. The contractor himself does the trimming and the busheling.[2] The employment of three teams has been found profitable, because they can just keep two average pressers busy, but it is by no means uncommon to find two-team shops. The largest task shop with which we are acquainted is a Lithuanian one in Brooklyn, where 57 men and girls are working, and it is also unique in being a non-Jewish task shop. It is rare to find a large shop where this system is employed. A well-informed coat manufacturer, who has been in this business in New York for fifteen years, says that not three task shops in this city employ over thirty workers. Many task shops were formerly to be found in the tenement houses, and were among the

[1] *Report of the Industrial Commission*, vol. xv, p. 345. This is undoubtedly a generous estimate, and is considerably in excess of that made by labor leaders in the garment trade.

[2] Repairing and re-shaping the garments when necessary.

places popularly known as sweat-shops. They are legally permitted only in factory buildings, and as a result of the introduction of the license system in tenement work,[1] the very small shops, in which the profits were not sufficient to pay for an independent work-place, have been given up.

Many coats are made up in shops in which the number of employees varies from 13 or 15 to 30 or 40, and in which differing degrees of division of labor are found. In some of them the operators are divided into classes, which do different grades of work, and a similar distinction is made among the basters. "Helpers" are also found in the different classes. The felling is rarely divided, and is usually given out to be done at home. Buttonholes also are made outside the shop. The wages of the inside workers are usually paid by the piece, but sometimes by the week. The employers are chiefly Jews.

At present there is no grade of coat that is not made in New York under the minute subdivision, or "section," system in factories. The Industrial Commission found the cheapest lined coat in the country—for which the contract price is nineteen cents—made up in Brooklyn in such an establishment, and the manufacturers have themselves started such factories for their best grade of ready-made clothing. In one factory which may be regarded as typical, we find that the machine work on each coat has been divided into eleven distinct parts: pocket making, sewing in sleeves, sewing around sleeves, seaming up the coat, stitching the coat, stitching buttons on linings, sewing around pockets, stitching under collars, making the lining, stitching canvas, and piping the facing. Each of these divisions of the work is performed by a different man, who does only

[1] Amendment to the Labor Law as made by *New York State Laws of 1899*, c. 191.

the one thing. In some cases, of course, it is necessary to have several workmen in a single branch, as in the case of pocket makers, of whom this establishment has six. The basting is similarly divided, into the chief basting, edge basting, canvas basting, shoulder basting, pairing sleeves and padding lapels. One of the chief economies effected by the factory system in the manufacture of coats is to be found in the basting. The high degree of skill attained by the operators who make only small parts of the coat renders the basting of such parts unnecessary. The pressing is divided between the pressers and the under-pressers, the latter of whom do the less difficult work. Besides the men employed in these main branches of the work, we find a foreman, a lining cutter, two men for trimming and three bushelers. Women and girls are employed in sewing on buttons and tacking, and others in pulling bastings. All the felling is done outside the factory, and where such is the case, there is rarely division of labor in this work. We are acquainted with one factory, however, where the finishing, which is all done inside the shop, is divided into three parts: finishing the collar, felling the armholes and felling the sleeve around the hand, and these parts are done by different women. Division of labor can hardly be carried further than it is when a girl spends all her time in felling armholes.

We can now pass more quickly over the pants and vest shops. As each of these garments is much simpler than a coat, less subdivision of work is to be found in their manufacture. On neither of them has the task system ever been employed. Little basting is necessary in making pants, and the sewing-machine operator, therefore, does most of the skilled work. While in coat making extreme accuracy of work is essential, among the pants operators high speed is especially sought for. This is

only in part to be explained by the fact that a much larger quantity of cheap pants is manufactured than of cheap coats. There are still a few of the old family shops employed in the making of pants, and these are to be found exclusively among the Germans of Brooklyn. A typical case is one in which the family consists of a man and his wife, two daughters, and a son. All of these are working in the shop. The man and his son do the pressing, and sometimes other work as well, one of the daughters runs a machine, the other is a baster, and the wife is a general assistant. In addition we find two persons, a Polish man and a German woman, employed as operators, and the button holes and finishing are done outside the shop. Such shops are manifestly merely survivals of an earlier time. In the case mentioned the family has been in this business here for thirty-three years. There is no inducement leading to the establishment of such shops. Even when all the members of the family are employed, they find it difficult to take work at the prices offered by the larger establishments.

The transition shops engaged in the pants trade are numerous. There is not as clear a line to be drawn between such shops and the factories as in the case of the coat manufacture, for in the pants trade the systems of work in the two classes of establishments differ little from each other. The machine operator in the factory continues to make the entire garment. In neither case is there much, if any, basting, and the pressing is divided into but two classes. The finishing is in both cases done outside. The distribution of work in one of these transition shops can be seen in the following record: Out of a total of 24 inside workers, 15 men were operators, 7 were pressers, 2 were sergers, and 2 women did the tacking of pockets and cleaning. Forty women did the finishing in their homes.

Although the factories in the pants manufacture introduce no definite change in the organization of the work, yet a marked tendency can be observed toward an increase in the size of establishments in this branch of trade. Contractors are enlarging their shops, and are in many cases becoming manufacturers; while the manufacturers themselves, who formerly gave out the work to contractors, are beginning to do the work in their own factories. The chief difference to be observed between the small plants and the larger ones is that in the latter the machines are more frequently run by mechanical power. Besides a number of large factories in New York devoted exclusively to the making of pants, there are others in which this work is combined with the making of overalls and of working men's pants in general. As such a factory will be described later in detail in connection with the overalls trade, the subject may be passed over for the present.

Vests are still chiefly made in small shops. A few of these are of the family type, but the majority are in the transition stage. These are in general smaller than the pants shops, and section work is rarely found. From 4 to 8 operators, 4 to 6 basters, 1 to 2 pressers, and 1 to 2 finishers form a combination frequently found. It is to be noted that the finishing of vests is usually done in the shop. An establishment in which 40 people are employed is considered large for this work, while in the pants factories we find sometimes as many as 400 or 500.

There is one part of the ready-made clothing trade that in contrast to the rest is confined almost exclusively to factories. The making of overalls was originally carried on to a small extent as a home industry. But the introduction of the sewing machine driven by power has in the last thirty years revolutionized this branch of the

trade. Large factories, whose employees are in some cases numbered by the hundreds, have established a flourishing trade in the making of overalls and workingmen's suits. This is the only branch of the clothing trade in which the city of New York does not take the lead. There are a few factories here, but the largest ones have been established in smaller cities. For this reason it has been decided to extend the investigation of the overalls trade to one of these cities. As the factory system is practically the only one under which the making of overalls needs to be considered, and as a somewhat detailed study of that will be made in a succeeding chapter, further description of the manufacture of overalls will for the present be omitted.

In general, then, we find that at present in the city of New York the family system has a few lingering representatives among the pants and vest shops; that the task system is found exclusively among the coat makers; that the small transition shops include the great majority of establishments for the making of vests, and also some pants and coat places; that the pants shops are increasing in size; and that the factory system has almost a complete control in the overalls trade, and is gaining ground in the manufacture of coats and pants.

Since early in the seventies, sewing machines have been largely used in all establishments for the manufacture of men's clothing. As late as 1894 instances were still to be found (among the knee-pants workers in Brooklyn) in which the workman furnished his own machine, taking it to the shop of the contractor; but I know of no clothing shops in New York at present in which the machines are not supplied either by the contractor or by the manufacturer, and the work that is done at home is hand work. In the small shops the machines are still driven

by foot power; in the large establishments usually by steam, gas or electricity. The following table, prepared from observations made on fifty typical clothing shops of different nationalities and different methods of work, shows the relative size of the shops employing respectively foot and mechanical power:

TABLE C.

FOOT POWER AND MECHANICAL POWER IN CLOTHING ESTABLISHMENTS.

Article manufactured.	*No. of shops.*	*No. of workmen in largest foot-power shop.*	*No. of workmen in smallest shop using mechanical power.*
Coats	28	33	27
Pants	12	26	15
Vests	10	17	21

From this record it appears that foot power is used in shops in which less than 15 people are employed; mechanical power of some kind in those in which there are more than 33 people; and either form of power in shops in which there are between 15 and 33 employees. As long as workmen can be found who are willing to run the foot-power machines, and as long as hours of work are unlimited, there is no incentive to the contractor in a small shop, especially in the case of coat work, to put in mechanical power. The contractor in the smallest shop found using mechanical power, that with 15 employees, says that he regrets putting in gas. It interferes with that irregular prolongation of work on the part of individual men, which is the chief economic advantage of the small places, and the increase in output in the more limited time, if any takes place, is not sufficient to make up for the increased cost. Undoubtedly mechanical power has been introduced in the last five years into numbers of the shops of medium size that in the table appear to use indifferently foot or mechanical

power; but in general it may be said that the increasing use of mechanical power in the clothing trade is due, not to the fact that it is gradually making its way into all classes of places, but rather to a disproportionate increase in the large shops and factories, in which its use is profitable, as against the increase in the small establishments, in which its employment is unprofitable.

An outline has been given of the general methods by which men's ready-made clothing is manufactured, but no notice has thus far been taken of the relation borne by the individual establishment in which the garment is made up, whether family shop, task shop, transition shop, or factory, to the manufacturer. The manufacturer in the ready-made clothing trade is the owner of the raw material and of the completed garment, but his control of the actual processes by which the transformation takes place is often very slight. The system is this: The manufacturer buys cloth and has it cut up for garments in his own shop. In some cases, notably in the overalls trade, the garments are then made up in his factory under the direction of a foreman or superintendent. But more often the cloth is given out to a contractor, who agrees for a certain sum to become responsible for the making of the garments. The contractor either has them made in his own shop, or, in some cases, gives out the work to sub-contractors. These in turn may give out part of the work, such as the finishing, to be done elsewhere. Under the contract system the manufacturer has no direct control over the place in which the goods are made up, over the men employed, or the wages paid. He can virtually exercise supervision, however, if he so desires, by refusing to give out additional work to a contraetor who fails to maintain proper conditions. In the past the only question between manu-

facturer and contractor has been one of the price charged and of the character of the work returned. The present effort of the trade unions to hold the manufacturers themselves answerable for conditions maintained in the shops of their contractors, will, if successful, place a definite responsibility on the manufacturer, which before this has been shifted to the less reliable contractor.

It has been customary to rail at the contractor as the hard-hearted oppressor of the poor, and to regard his earnings as wrung from the labor of others. He has been regarded as the specific cause of the wretched conditions that have in large measure prevailed among the workers in the clothing industry, and it has been asserted that the abolition of the contract system would in itself be sufficient to remedy all the evils of which complaint is made. But the English investigation of the sweating system, made by the House of Lords,[1] proved conclusively that insanitary workshops, long hours of labor and low wages were not only found in industries in which the contract system prevailed, but were common also to some in which the laborers were employed directly by the manufacturer and to others in which the laborer worked on material that he had himself supplied. Conditions of labor undesirable from the point of view of the workman and from that of society at large are bound to prevail in any industry in which, for some reason, masses of helpless people congregate—people helpless from physical weakness, lack of skill, ignorance, or such general unfamiliarity with local conditions as is found among the members of an immigrant class. Where such a mass is found, there you are sure to find low returns to labor,

[1] *Fifth Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Reports of Committees, Parliamentary Papers*, 1890, vol. xvii.

with accompanying discomforts. There, too, the small organizer of labor—the contractor—will find a profitable field for his activity. He may increase the evils that would otherwise exist; he does not create them.

What, then, is the precise nature of the contractor? What service does he perform that renders it profitable for the clothing manufacturer to give into the contractor's hands the making of garments, rather than to have them put together in his own workshops under a foreman or superintendent? These questions cannot be better answered than by quoting the following descriptions of the activities of a contractor: "The position of the contractor or sweater now in the business in American cities is peculiarly that of an organizer and employer of immigrants. The man best fitted to be a contractor is a man who is well acquainted with his neighbors, who is able to speak the language of several classes of immigrants, who can easily persuade his neighbors or their wives and children to work for him, and in this way can obtain the cheapest help. The contractor can increase the number of people employed in the trade at very short notice. During the busy season when the work doubles, the number of people employed increases in the same proportion.[1] All of the contractors are agents and go around among the people. House-wives who formerly worked at the trade and abandoned it after marriage are called into service for an increased price of a dollar or two a week. Men who have engaged in other occupations, such as small business, peddling, etc., and are out

[1] This increase in the number of people employed is over-estimated. The first effect of an increase in work is to give steady employment to those who in the slack season are working only on half-time or less. Working over-time is also common in the small shops when work is plenty.

of business most of the year, are marshaled into service by the contractor, who knows all of them, and can easily look them up and put them in as competitors, by offering them a dollar or two a week more than they are getting elsewhere."[1] The contractor then has maintained his position in the clothing trade because of his ability to secure cheap labor and to respond to the demand for elasticity. Whatever may have been the former situation in England, when the expression "sweating system" first came into use as a term picturesquely descriptive of the abuses of the contract system, the clothing contractor of the present time is an energetic, industrious man, usually an experienced tailor, and in most cases does not differ materially in training from those he employs. The personal relations between him and his employees are often friendly. In the small shops he works on the clothing with his men, and his hours of labor are sometimes longer than theirs. In the large shops his position differs from that of a foreman or superintendent chiefly in the fact that he has a personal incentive to keep wages as low as possible and rigidly to supervise the work.

The chief evil in the contract system is that it introduces an irresponsible middleman between the manufacturer and the workman. The manufacturer disclaims all responsibility for the conditions surrounding the workers, since they are not in his employ. The contractor says that the price paid him by the manufacturer renders it impossible for him to pay higher wages, that he himself is helpless. The trade unions have found it impossible to enforce agreements made with contractors because of their lack of property. Under such conditions it is not strange that the abolition of the contract system

[1] *Report of the Industrial Commission*, vol. xv, pages 320, 321.

is one of the chief objects of the trade unions in the clothing industry.

Some branches of the clothing industry are affected to a greater extent than others by the contract system. Though the better grades of ready-made clothing are occasionally made up in the "inside shops," as those under the direct control of the manufacturer are called, the great mass of coat and vest work is done by contract. The manufacturers are, however, to an increasing extent taking over the making of pants. The one branch of the clothing trade which has practically cleared itself from the contract system is the overalls industry, and this, as we have already noted, does not flourish largely in New York city. The family shop, the task shop, and the transition shop belong to the contractor; with the factory he has less to do. As the manufacturing establishment increases in size, the power of the contractor wanes. But it must not be forgotten that the number of factories is comparatively small, while the typical shops, the shops that exist by thousands in New York, are the task and transition shops in which the Jewish contractors make up coats, pants and vests.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

THE ratio borne by the number of women in the ready-made clothing industry to the total number of employees varies greatly in different states.[1] It is highest in Indiana, where the women form 90.72 per cent. of those employed, and lowest in New York. The following table indicates the variations in the leading six states, ranked according to the total number of employees in this industry. These states employ also the largest absolute numbers of women in the clothing trade.

TABLE D

WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE READY-MADE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

State.	*Number of Women.*	*Per cent. of total Employees.*	*Number of Children.*	*Per cent. of total Employees.*
New York	16,700	40.44	326	0.79
Illinois	9,105	60.79	778	5.19
Pennsylvania	5,115	48.73	358	3.41
Maryland	5,202	53.49	597	6.14
Ohio	4,365	67.40	176	2.70
Missouri	5,098	83.18	74	1.21
United States	69,143	57.57	2992	2.49

Of the total 120,110 clothing workers in the country at large, 57.57 per cent. are women. But this percentage has been largely determined by the conditions in one city, New York, and cannot be considered typical for the

[1] The percentages in this and the following paragraphs are all computed from the figures given in the various *Bulletins on Manufactures, Twelfth Census.*

rest of the country. Only five states, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Maryland and New Jersey, have so low a percentage, while the percentage is higher than the average in the remaining twenty-five states in which this industry is found. The median is in this case a more significant figure than the average. In half the states the number of women exceeds 82 per cent. of the total number employed in the industry, while in half it falls below that percentage.

The extreme variability in the employment of women, resulting in an average of 57 per cent. and a median of 82 per cent., is indeed noteworthy. It is to be explained in part by the fact that the work carried on in different states is not always of the same kind. For example, in a southern state may flourish the making of men's cotton suits, work usually performed chiefly by women, while in another state heavier goods may predominate. But this is not the point of chief importance. There are certain well-defined parts of the work on men's clothing that are universally performed by women. There are other parts in which men are always engaged. But there is much of the labor that is suitable for either men or women. The customs of different communities differ in this regard. In view of the widespread popular impression that the work of women is cheaper in these debatable grounds than is that of men, an impression founded upon the undoubtedly lower week wages of the former, we might perhaps expect to find that the states in which the clothing industry has expanded to the largest dimensions, and in which, for that very reason, it is safe to assume that garments are produced at relatively low cost, would be characterized by the employment of an especially large percentage of women. Such is not the case. Of the first six states all but Missouri are found among the

states that fall below the median, 82 per cent. Of the five states in which the percentage is below the average, three, New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, are among the leading states in the industry. Moreover, if the numbers of the women employees in the first six states are combined, a combination representing about 66 per cent. of all the women in the industry, it will be found that they form only 51.13 per cent. of the total number of employees in these states, a percentage considerably below the average. The conclusion which is to be drawn is that while a large part of the work in this industry has been and will continue to be performed by women, a wide extension of this field is characteristic rather of the less important states than of those that have succeeded in dominating this trade. If immigration were to be greatly restricted, however, it is possible that this situation would be altered, since the male labor, which has contributed so largely to the growth of the clothing trade in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Baltimore, is largely that of immigrants.

If the census enumerators have succeeded in securing complete returns for the employment of children in the manufacture of men's ready-made clothing, the number is not large. North Carolina has the largest percentage, 8.37, but this represents only 72 cases. In several states no children are employed, and the very low percentage in New York is noteworthy. With the exception of Kentucky, where there are 106 children, all states in which more than 100 children are employed are to be found in Table D. In this connection it must be remembered that the term "children" includes all employees under sixteen years of age. Since no legal difficulties are to be apprehended through the admission that girls and boys under that age are employed, it is fair to sup-

pose that so far as the shops and factories are concerned the enumeration is fairly accurate. Of the 2992 cases reported, a large majority probably consists of boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, who are employed in finishing or in pulling bastings. Concerning the employment of young children, who are popularly supposed to be found at work in the tenements to quite an extent, more will be said in a later chapter.

We will pass now to a consideration of the actual conditions surrounding the women employed in the clothing trade. The material on which this description is based consists of observations made in New York City during a period extending from 1897 to 1902, in the course of which I have filled out many shop schedules and have held personal interviews with manufacturers, contractors and employees. Tables E, F, G and H present the records of 47 shops that may be regarded as fairly typical for the coat, pants and vest trade of New York.

TABLE E.—COATS.

Total No. of Employees.	Nationality.[a]	Percentage of Women.	Women in the Shop. Number.[b] It.	Ger.	Jew.	Class of Work.	Wages. Piece.[c]	Week.[d]	Hours per Week.	Months Employed.	Outside Finishers. Number.[b] It.	Ger.	Jew.	Wages. Piece.[c]	Week.[d]	Power.	Contract Price of Article.	Weekly Output.[e]
						Task Shops.												
17	Jew.	29			1	Tacking.		7	No Limit.	8				[f]		Foot.	75c	264
			4			Felling.	5, 8										$1.12½[f]	120[f]
18	Jew.	28			1	Felling.		7	No Limit.	8–9						Foot.	65–93c	400
			4			Felling.	4½–5	4–5										
19	Jew.	37			1	Tacking.		9	72	8	6			5		Foot.	75c	400
20	Jew.	25			2	Sewing Buttons.		7			3			5		Foot.	75–85c[f]	200
22	Jew.	23			3	Felling.		7	66	11						Foot.	75c	300
			2			Felling.	4–6	4–5.50										
24	Jew.	37½			2	Felling.		6.50–7		9	4		3	5	3	Foot.	12½, 68c[f]	400
						Transition Shops.												
8	Jew.	37½			1	Edge Basting.		8	60 & Over.	10						Foot.	40c	300
					2	Felling.		4.50 & 6										
9	Jew.	22			1	Felling.		7	60	9	1			4½		Foot.	88½c[f]	96[f]
14	Jew.	21			2	Felling.		6 & 6.50	66	10	1			4	4	Foot.	60–65c	250
14	Jew.	29			2	Felling.			66	8						Foot.	60c	300
					2	Felling.		6 & 7										
15	German	33		2		Edge Basting.		6	59	9		2		5–6	3–5	Foot.	42½c	200
				1		Edge Basting.		5										
17	Jew.	24			2	Sewing Buttons.		5 & 6	66	6–8	2			4½	2	Foot.	70c	240
17	Jew.	29	1		1	Sewing Buttons.		5 & 6	60	8–9	3			1½	3	Foot.	40c	1000
18	Jew.	17			2	Felling.	2½		59	10						Foot.	40–45c	600
					1	Edge Basting.		8										
19	Jew.	26			2	Sewing Buttons.		7	66							Foot.	62½–65c	450
					3	Felling.	4–5	4–5										
23	Jew.	30			1	Edge Basting.		9	60 & Over.	9						Foot.	62–75c	500
					1	Basting Armholes.		7										
			4			Felling.	4	4										
					1	Felling.		6										
27	Jew.	22	1		1	Felling.		6	60							Gas.	62½c	600
			4			Felling.	3–4											

[a] Prevailing nationality among operators and basters. [b] Average number. [c] In cents. [d] In dollars. [e] Maximum. [f] Overcoats.
[g] Union shop. [h] In Brooklyn.

TABLE E.—COATS.—*Concluded.*

	Total No. of Employees.	Nationality.[a]	Percentage of Women.	Women in the Shop.							Outside Finishers.					Power.	Contract Price of Article.	Weekly Output.[e]
				Number.[b]			Class of Work.	Wages.		Hours per Week.	Months Employed.	Number.[b]			Wages.				
				It.	Ger.	Jew.		Piece.[c]	Week.[d]			It.	Ger.	Jew.	Piece.[c]	Week.[d]			
Transition Shops.—Concluded.																			
18	37	Jew.	27	4			Felling.	5		59		2			5		Steam.	75, 88½c	450
				2			Padding Lapels.		4										
				1		1	Sewing Buttons.		7.50										
19[f]	41	Jew.	24			1	Basting Armholes.		10	59	7–9	5			1½	3	Foot.	27-28c	2000
						3	Sewing Buttons.		5, 6 & 7										
				1			Sewing Buttons.												
20	44	Jew.	32	3			Hand Buttonholing.	3	10–12	Irregular.	7–8						Foot.	$3.00	170
				2			Padding Collars.		3–6										
				5			Felling.		3.50–6										
						1	Tacking.		7										
				1			Tacking.		5										
				2			Tacking.		6										
Factories.																			
21	50	Jew.	16			2	Busheling.		10	60	10						Gas.	35c, $1.12[g]	1500
						4	Felling.		6										
						2	Felling.		8										
22[f]	50	Jew.	18	6			Felling.		5	66	6						Steam.	19c	3000
				2			Sewing Buttons.		5										
						1	Sewing Buttons.		4										
23	54	Jew.	35			1	Basting Armholes.		10	59	12	10			5	3	Gas.	87c	750
						1	Basting Armholes.	2	5										
						3	Sewing Buttons.		7										
				2			Basting Sleeves.		6 & 7										
				2			Basting Canvas.		4 & 5										
24[f]	57	Lithuanian.	35		5[h]		Tacking.		6	60[i]	8	15			4	1.60	Steam.	75c	600
25	104	Jew.	33			2	Basting Canvas.		8	60	8	18			4	3.15	Steam.	75c	1650
				2			Padding Lapels.		4.50					3	4	3.15			
						8	Tacking.		6										
					1		Tacking.		7										
				1			Tacking.		5										

[a] Prevailing nationality among operators and basters. [b] Average number. [c] In cents. [d] In dollars. [e] Maximum. [f] In Brooklyn.

TABLE F.—PANTS

	Total Number of Employees.	Nationality.	Percentage of Women.	Women in the Shop.								Outside Finishers.					Power.	Contract Price of Article.	Weekly Output.[d]
				Number.[a]			Class of Work.	Wages.		Hours per Week.	Months Employed.	Number.[a]			Wages.				
				It.	Ger.	Jew.		Piece.[b]	Week.[c]			It.	Ger.	Jew.	Piece.[b]	Week.[c]			
							Family Shops.												
26[e]	11	Ger.	82		1[f]		Operating.		=10[g]	59	9–10	5			6		Foot.	35–45c	400
					2		Basting.		5 & 6										
					1[f]		Trimming.		=5[g]										
27[e]	11	Ger.	73		1[h]		Operating.		=$8.50[g]	60	11	3			6–8	3–4	Foot.	30–35c	200
					1		Operating.		6										
					1		Basting.		4.50										
					1[i]		Busheling.												
					1		Overcasting.		8.50										
28[e]	12	Ger.	92		1[j]		Operating, Trimming and Busheling.			60 Overtime.	11	3	2		7 7	2.–2.50 2.–2.50	Foot.	30–35c	250
					1		Operating.		7.50										
					2		Sewing Buttons.		4.										
					1[k]		Helping.												
							Transition Shops.												
29[e]	16	Jew.	50							59	7	8			5–6	1.75–2	Foot.	33c	500
30	25	Jew.	48			4	Finishing.	3–4	3–5	60 and Overtime.				8	3–4	1.50–5	Foot.	12½–20c	1000
31	29	Jew.	45	1		1	Busheling.		6	No Limit.	10	12			5		Foot.	25c	1200
32[e]	29	Jew.	52				Busheling.		5	59	7	14			5–5½	1.75–2	Gas.	25–27c	900

[a] Average number. [b] In cents. [c] In dollars. [d] Maximum. [e] In Brooklyn. [f] Sister of contractor. [g] Wages not paid but estimated.
[h] Daughter of contractor. [i] Wife of contractor. [j] Contractor herself. [k] Mother of contractor.

TABLE F.—PANTS.—*Concluded.*

	Total Number of Employees.	Nationality.	Percentage of Women.	Women in the Shop.								Outside Finishers.					Power.	Contract Price of Article.	Weekly Output.[d]
				Number.[a]			Class of Work.	Wages.		Hours per Week.	Months Employed.	Number.[a]			Wages.				
				It.	Ger.	Jew.		Piece.[b]	Week.[c]			It.	Ger.	Jew.	Piece.[b]	Week.[c]			
									Factories.										
33	62	Jew.	68			1[e]	Busheling.		[f]	59	7	40			5–7		Foot.	24–32c	2000
						1	Overcasting.		9–12										
34	65	Jew.	51	1			Buttonhole Operating.		5	59	11						Electricity.		2000
				20		10	Finishing.	4½	3–6										
				2			Sewing Buttons by Machine.		5 & 8										
35	69	Jew.	49	3			Busheling.		3, 4 & 5	59	8	30			4½–7	2–4	Electricity.	24–33c	1800
						1	Tacking.		5										
36[g]	70	Jew.	60	2			Busheling.		6 & 8	60	6	40			9–10½	3–4	Foot.	32–35c	1500
37[h]	70	Ger.	80		5		Operating.	10–16	8–10.50[i]	59[j]	12	13	20		9½–15		Gas.	50–62c	1500
					2		Overcasting.	1	3.50–6										
					10		Basting.	5½–8	6–7.50										
					1		Busheling.		7										
					5		Tacking Pockets.		6										

[a] Average number. [b] In cents. [c] In dollars. [d] Maximum. [e] Daughter of contractor. [f] Wages not paid. [g] Union shop. [h] In Brooklyn.
[i] Men doing same work at same piece rates earn $10–12 per week. [j] No overtime during hot months.

Total Number of Employees.	Nationality.	Percentage of Women.	Women in the Shop.							Outside Finishers.					Power.	Contract price of Article.	Weekly Output[d]
			Number.[a]			Class of Work.	Wages.		Hours per Week.	Months Employed.	Number.[a]			Wages.				
			It.	Ger.	Jew.		Piece.[b]	Week.[c]			It.	Ger.	Jew.	Piece.[b]	Week.[c]			
								Family Shop.										
38[e f]		Ger.							Irregular.	9						Foot.		
								Transition Shops.										
39[g]	9	Jew.	55			3 Basting.	4	5.	60	7						Foot.	20c	300
						1 Finishing.		5.										
				1		Finishing.		0.										
40	12	Jew.	50			4 Basting.		10.	Men Unlimited.	7						Foot.	23–26c	850
						2 Finishing.		6.	Girls 60.									
41[g]	12	Jew.	42			4 Basting.	5–6	4–6	Unlimited.	10						Foot.	22–27c	500
						1 Finishing.	2											
42	17	Jew.	41			1 Basting.		4.50	Unlimited	9						Foot.	22–26c	900
						4 Basting.	4–6	8–9										
						2 Finishing.	¾–1	5.										
43[f]	17	Jew.	53			4 Basting.		8.	Unlimited.	10	1			½	2	Foot.	18–30c	500
						4 Finishing.	3–4	4.										
44	20	Jew.	35			3 Basting.		10.	59	7						Foot.	20–25c	1200
						2 Basting.		6.										
						2 Finishing.	1⅛–2											
45[f]	22	Ger.	64		1	Joining Backs.		7.50	59	9						Gas.	20c	1000
					1	Pocket Making.		8.										
					3	Sewing in Pockets.	2–3	7.50										
					1[h]	Sewing Around.												
					1	Making Backs.		6.										
					3	Finishing.		4–5										
					2	Cutting Backs.		2.50 & 5.50										
					2	Turning Over.		3.50 & 4.										
46	45	Jew.	47			5 Helping.		12.	59	8						Gas.	25c	3000
						4 Helping.		10.50										
						6 Helping.		6.										
						2 Finishing.		9.										
						1 Finishing.		6.										
				1		Finishing.		6.										
				2		Finishing.	⅔											

[a] Average number. [b] In cents. [c] In dollars. [d] Maximum. [e] Man and wife found at work alone. [f] In Brooklyn.
[g] Union shop. [h] Wife of contractor.

TABLE H.

AN "INSIDE" COAT FACTORY, SHOWING REMARKABLE EXTENSION OF THE USE OF CHEAP ITALIAN FEMALE LABOR.[1]

	Total Number of Employees.	Nationality.	Percentage of Women.	Number of Women Operating and Basting.	Nationality.	Wages per Week.	Number of Women Finishing, etc.	Nationality.	Wages.
47	124	Men chiefly Jews.	53	1, sewing sleeve lining.	It.	$3.50.	7, making hand button-holes.	J.	2½c. a piece.
				5, edge-basting.	It.	$3.25, $4.75, $6 and 2 @ $4.50 each.	2, making hand button-holes.	It.	2½c. a piece.
				7, basting in sleeves and tacking lining and canvas in arm-holes.	It.	$1.50, $2, $3, $3.75, $5.50 and 2 @ $3.25 each.	15, felling.	It.	8c. a coat.
							1, pulling bastings.	J.	1c. a coat.
							1, pulling bastings.	J.	1½c. a coat.
				7, padding lapels.	It.	$1.75, $2.75, $3.25, $3.50, $4, and 2 @ $1.50 each.	9, felling at home.	It.	8c. a coat.
							6, busheling.	J.	1 @ $8 per week and 5 @ $4 per week, each.
							1, sewing on buttons.	J.	$7 per week.
							1, sewing on buttons.	G.	$5 per week.
							1, sewing on buttons.	It.	$4.50 per wk.
							1, making buttonholes.	J.	$4 per week.
							1, sewing ticket.	J.	$6 per week.

[1] This factory produces coats for which the contract price is usually about $1.50. The weekly output is 600 coats. Machines are run by steam power. Employees work 59 hours a week, and have employment for about 10 months.

In considering the actual physical conditions under which the women in the ready-made clothing trade are performing their work we must group them into two broad classes, those who sew at home, and those who work in a shop or factory. The home-workers will be referred to only incidentally in this chapter. We will pass directly to a consideration of the second group, the women employed in shops or factories.

Formerly ready-made clothing was made up to a large extent in small Jewish shops in tenement houses. The room used for this purpose was not originally intended for a shop, and simply formed a part of the two or three-room apartment occupied by the contractor and his family. Here two or three men, and occasionally one or two girls, were employed, in addition to the contractor and possibly his son or daughter. Access to such a shop was frequently through the sleeping-rooms of the family, and even where the room was used as a shop, it continued to some extent to serve household purposes. At night it was readily metamorphosed into a sleeping room. A worse condition of affairs could hardly be imagined. Insufficient light, lack of air, and excessive filthiness characterized the greater part of such places. Hidden away in the tenements, they escaped factory regulations. The law made no attempt to dictate the conditions under which members of a family should work in the house, and thus provided a loophole through which these shops could evade notice. The legal machinery through which tenement shops in this trade have been abolished we shall consider later. It is sufficient here to say that such shops no longer exist in the city of New York.

The shops in which women to-day work on ready-made clothing are located either in what are termed

regular factory buildings, or in rear buildings devoted exclusively to shops of various kinds. Under these circumstances practically none of them can escape the notice of the factory inspector, and a certain minimum of comfort and decency is therefore assured. They still differ considerably, however, in respect to light, air and general sanitary provisions. These differences are determined chiefly by the size of the establishment, but location also has to be considered to a certain extent. There are few establishments that would pass as "model factories." But the majority of the rooms in which fifty or more people are employed make as good provision for light and air as could well be expected in a city like New York. I doubt whether it would be possible to find any shop of that size which is not superior in both these respects to some of the schoolrooms which the city provides in the same localities for the instruction of the sons and daughters of these workers. The small shops are less admirable. Windows are sometimes found on only one side of the room, and in winter there is little ventilation. In Brooklyn the conditions are in these respects better than in the Borough of Manhattan. The provisions of the law in respect to water-closets and washrooms are not rigidly enforced.[1] It is but fair to state, however, that even the more poorly equipped shops compare favorably with the homes of the women employed in them. Regarded exclusively on its physical side, apart from the question of sedentary habits and possible over-exertion, the shop is unquestionably a healthier place than the home.

From almost all points of view, except that of sanitation, the classification of shops according to the branch of work followed in them is of fundamental importance,

[1] *Laws of New York State, 1897*, c. 415, § 88.

and the division in the preceding tables has therefore been made on that basis. The effect of the difference in the organization of the coat, pants and vest shops is seen in tables E, F and G first in the varying proportions of women employed in them. It is evident that the coat shops employ relatively the smallest number of women, ranging from 16 to 37½ per cent. of the total number of employees, and averaging 26 per cent. These are followed by the vest shops with an average of 48 per cent., and then come the pant shops, in which the women form 60 per cent. of all those employed. In computing these averages the finishers, who take work out to be done at home, are included among the employees.

The occasion for these differences will best be revealed by a study of the column which indicates the character of the work performed by the women in each case. As we have previously noted, there are three broad divisions of the work involved in making a garment, the machine work or operating, the basting, part of which is the most highly skilled hand work, but the rest requires less training, and the general finishing, including the felling, tacking, sewing on buttons, and the like. In the record given in Table E for twenty-five coat establishments, not a woman operator is to be found. There are a few of them, however, in New York city. I know of two, each of whom is the only woman employed at a machine in the shop in which she works. Among the basters in the task shops women are also generally lacking, but the large places employ them in some of the minor work, such as padding lapels, sewing in canvas, and padding collars, work that requires little skill. In the coat shops girls are employed to sew on buttons and to do the tacking, and the bottoms of the coats are felled either by

girls in the shop or sometimes, as the records show, by women outside. The making of a coat, however, is a complicated piece of work, and this finishing bears a small ratio to the total labor involved. Since this is the part done largely by women, we see how it is that they form so small a percentage of the total.

In the vest shops the proportion of women is increased by the fact that the basting is to a large extent in their hands in both the German and the Jewish shops. In the German shops we note that the operating also is to some extent done by women.[1]

But it is among the pants makers that the percentage of women is greatest. While it is true that in the German family shops the women do both the basting and the operating on pants, and while they share in this work also in the German factories,[2] the combined output of these establishments is not sufficiently large for the conditions in them to be regarded as those determining the proportion of women in the whole pants trade. Neither is the employment of women as bushelers of primary importance. The real reason for the increased proportion of women's work is the large relative amount of labor that must be put into the finishing of pants. There is as much felling to be done on a twenty-five cent pair of pants as on a seventy-five cent coat, that is, the felling is relatively three times as important in the former case as in the latter. The effect of this upon the demand for women in that branch of work is further intensified by the fact that the work is to a large extent performed outside the shops by women partially occupied with household duties. The effect of this outside employment is to scatter the work among a much larger num-

[1] See Table G, Case 45.

[2] See Table F. Cases 26, 27, 28 and 37.

ber of women than would be sufficient if it were in the hands of shop or factory employees, devoting themselves exclusively to that work. From the point of view of numbers alone, the pants finishers far exceed in importance any other group of women employed in the ready-made clothing trade, and are probably not far from equal to all the others combined.

Three questions naturally present themselves in connection with this analysis of the character of the work performed by women in the coat, pants and vest trade. Why is the division of labor between men and women such as we find it to be? Does this division differ under the different systems of work? Is there any evidence that a change in this respect is taking place? In attempting to answer these questions there is danger of dogmatism. From a study of New York City alone it would be natural to conclude either that machine operating and basting on men's clothing was, except in rare instances, beyond the physical strength of women, or that the skill demanded was such as they could acquire only with great difficulty. Yet in other cities women are employed as operators and basters on all but the heaviest grade of goods. In Chicago, for example, there are coat factories in which all the machine work is done by Polish or Bohemian women and girls. In the face of such facts broad generalizations on the subject of the work for which women are suited must be made with great care.

There is perhaps no branch of the trade in which women are not to be found. Even in the pressing of coats, which is extremely heavy work, the exhausting effect of which is frequently noticeable on the men engaged in it, I have found women employed. But it is possible to visit hundreds of establishments without find-

ing a woman doing this work. At the other extreme is the felling, sewing on of buttons, tacking of pockets, and the like. For this work no physical strength is necessary and practically no training, and consequently it is work readily resorted to by girls and unskilled women. Any man of ordinary strength finds day labor more remunerative than this work would be, even if he were as accustomed to sewing as a woman is. In this lightest grade of work, as in the heaviest, there is practically no competition between the sexes.

When the basting is much subdivided, the parts which require little skill, such as padding lapels, are undertaken by women. But in regard to basting in general the situation is somewhat different. Our tables indicate that among both Jewish and German vest-makers this work is largely performed by women. It is certainly within their physical strength, since the articles on which they are working are light; and the work, while requiring some practice, is not of exceptional difficulty. This is probably the most skillful work, with the exception of the making of buttonholes by hand, that is done in this trade by Jewish women.

Why is similar work on coats not performed by women? In the first place, as we have seen, almost no coat work is now done among the Germans in New York. It is practically confined to the Jews. The Jewish baster, who understands putting a coat together, is a highly skilled artisan, and one who works with great rapidity. Few, if any, Jewish women have ever cared to undertake this work, and if we may judge from their experience in edge-basting, it would be undesirable for them to do so. For the edge-basting, which is a lower grade of work requiring less skill, was formerly done here by women. As the length of the task was increased,

and the pressure upon the worker became correspondingly intensified, the women were unable to hold their positions. They were unable to keep up the pace demanded by the other members of the team and have been replaced by men. The question has in this case been not so much one of ability to perform the work as of ability to keep up high speed, to work under intense pressure and at irregular intervals. The shops and factories in which the task system is not employed have followed the more recent example set by this system, and have employed as edge-basters men capable of working at high speed. This may have been due in part to the fact that the basters that have in recent years received their training in the small shops have been men. It is also true, however, that Jewish women are in general quite as willing to take up work in which the maximum wage is quickly secured, as to attempt more difficult branches where a considerable period of training is necessary; and that Jewish men are not inclined to regard the work of women as worthy of serious attention.

The case of coat operating is closely allied to that of basting. It was pointed out in the second chapter that the success of the Jews in practically driving the Germans out of the coat trade and in largely encroaching upon them in the pants trade was due to the high degree of speed and skill attained by the Jewish male operator, combined in the former case with the introduction of the ingenious task system. The pace set by the Jews is one that women have not been able to maintain, and the contractors have found the former, even at the same piece rate, more profitable employees. The competition, however, when it formerly occurred, was in reality a complicated one, involving different nationalities and different systems of work, as well as a different division of labor

between the sexes. The result was the survival of the Jewish male operator and the task system. Later modifications have occurred, as we have already noted, but without introducing female operatives into coat work.

The general situation in New York, then, is one that has been to a great extent determined by the predominating influence of the Jewish people. In the coat work, controlled by them, women do little skilled work, while the high speed attained by the men is remarkable.

Does the division of labor between men and women in the ready-made clothing trade differ materially under the various systems of manufacture? A study of the third column in Tables E, F and G shows that when we are considering the manufacture of the same article it seems to make comparatively little difference, in regard to the employment of women, whether it is put together in a task shop, a transition shop, or a factory. It has been noted that the German family shops are especially characterized by a large proportion of women, but in this case it is in reality the point of nationality that is of importance. If these shops are compared with a German factory, such as Case 37, the truth is clearly brought out. There is little difference between the percentage of women employed in making pants in this German factory, and that in the family shops doing similar work. This influence of nationality appears strikingly when we compare the German and Jewish pants factories, the German establishment employing 12 per cent. more women than any one of its Jewish competitors.

The minute subdivision of work in coat factories affords place for some less skilled workers as operators and basters, but in New York a smaller number of these positions is filled by women than one might expect. The pocket-makers, sleeve-makers, seam-stitchers, and

the like, who take the place of the general operator, are quite as skilled workmen as their predecessors and frequently earn higher wages, while even the simpler forms of operating on coats are still, under the factory system, in the hands of Jewish men. The few women basters that may have been introduced through the factory system make little impression upon the general proportion of women. Table H, Case 47, however, shows us one factory where the introduction of women basters has been carried much further than in any other factory cited, and suggests some interesting possibilities. In Chicago the situation is very different from that in New York. The factory system has been closely associated with the employment of women as operators, and their success in that city may perhaps be attributed to this connection rather than to their actual competing power.[1]

It is not possible to trace any connection in New York between the introduction of mechanical power into the shops and the employment of women as operators. German women work at the machine with apparently equal readiness in either case, and no attempt has been made to increase the employment of women as operators by lightening the labor in this way.

Is there any evidence that a change is in progress in New York in respect to the work of women in the ready-made clothing trade? It has already been noted that in the last few years women have gradually been superseded by men as basters in the task shops, because they could not maintain the high speed required. On the other hand the subdivision factories that have arisen in the last six years, and which are increasing in number, may make somewhat larger the demand for women in

[1] *Report of the Industrial Commission*, vol. xv, p. 356.

the lower grades of basting. The small German shops, however, can hardly be said to be holding their place. But there is certainly no wide-spread change to be noted. Forty-eight out of fifty employers will tell you that they are employing the same proportion of women to-day as formerly.

Our general conclusions, then, concerning the distribution of women in the ready-made clothing trade in New York City are as follows:

I. Women are employed in general on coats, vests and pants in felling, tacking and sewing on buttons.

II. Women are employed in basting vests.

III. Women are employed as operators only in the German pants and vest shops.

IV In general the Germans make greater use of women's labor than do the Jews.

V Jewish activity and influence is to a large extent responsible for the restriction of women's work in New York City.

VI. The employment of women is not materially influenced by the different systems under which the work may be done.

VII. The introduction of steam, gas, or electricity as motive power for running machines has had little influence upon the number of women employed.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY (*Continued*)

UNDER the present conditions of the ready-made clothing trade in the city of New York, what part of a woman's time is spent in the shop? What remuneration does she receive for her labor? What are some of the personal characteristics, outside influences, and general interests and prospects of these women? These are the questions that will be considered in the present chapter.

The normal working day in the better class of establishments making ready-made clothing is one extending from 7 a. m. to 6 p. m., with one hour off at noon for dinner. The hours of labor for women employed in shops and factories are by law restricted to sixty per week and ten per day, and no over-time is permitted on any day, except to make possible a shorter workday on the last day of the week.[1] Any direct inquiry, therefore, as to how long women work, is inevitably met by the contractor with the reply of 59 or 60 hours. But I have learned from investigation that this is far more likely to be true when these are the hours in general observed by the entire establishment, than it is where the male employees have regularly a longer working day, or where there is much work done overtime. The hours given in Tables E, F, G and H, therefore, are in general those

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 77, as amended by *Laws of 1899*, c. 192.

during which the establishments are open and work is going on. The division of labor, as we have already seen, is usually such that the work of men is not restricted by the departure of the girls, as, for example, the work of the operators might be, if the basters should leave. But when there is pressure to turn out as much work as possible for a few weeks or months, there is certainly a tendency to demand an extension of the hours of the women workers to those of the shop in general. However, this is not invariably done, In at least two shops in the schedules, numbers 24 and 40, where the hours of the men, who are paid by the piece, either may extend to twelve a day or are unlimited, the women never work more than ten hours a day.

The differences that are to be noted between the small and large establishments in respect to hours are of the same general character as in the matter of sanitary conditions. The task shops are the worst offenders; I have never found one that made even a pretence that the working day is limited to ten hours. Work in these shops is extremely irregular, there is either a feast or a famine. In one week, for example, the employees work fourteen hours a day for three days, and have no work during the rest of the time. The hours of the women workers are not usually subject to as great fluctuations as those of the men, but it is extremely difficult in these task shops to enforce the provisions of the factory law as to hours. This difficulty exists likewise in the small transition shops. The chief security that a female employee has for the restriction of her hours of labor to the number legally permitted, rests in the fact that she is employed in a place of considerable size, so that failure to observe the law would attract attention, and possibly cause the prosecution of the contractor. It will be

noticed that of the eleven factories scheduled, nine are open for work only 59 or 60 hours a week, and of the other two, one never employs women more than ten hours a day.

In regard to the working hours generally observed, a distinction should be made between the Jewish and the German people. The shops of the latter rarely run more than ten hours a day. If we examine the seven German shops presented in the tables, we note that six of them work regularly 59 or 60 hours a week, one of these admitting that work is occasionally done overtime in the busy season. In the single shop where hours were reported as irregular, the only people found at work were the contractor and his wife. This record is the more remarkable since five of the seven shops are small establishments, of such size that if found in the Jewish quarter they would undoubtedly be among those characterized by long hours of work. It is also worthy of notice that the only establishment reporting special concessions in the matter of hours during the summer months is a German factory (case 37). Here the regular summer schedule requires only 55 hours per week, and no work is performed overtime during the warm weather. Summer is not a busy season in the trade in general, but this is a factory that keeps running regularly all the year.

There are two reasons for the difference between the length of the working day in the Jewish shops and its length in the German shops. The first is to be found in the greater desire on the part of the Jewish men to increase their earnings by every possible method. The second is the fact that women occupy a more important position in the German shops, and the burden of longer hours would, therefore, fall upon them to a greater

extent than it does among the Jews. As no German shops have been observed where the main branches of the work on ready-made clothing are as completely in the hands of men as is the case in the Jewish shops, it is impossible to say whether the former reason would be sufficient by itself to account for the difference.

An interesting question is that of the extent to which the hours of employment may be modified to suit the convenience of the individual employee. Probably such modification is rare, especially in the larger establishments. The persons desiring special privileges would naturally be married women with household duties. There are too many girls ready to take positions to render the making of individual concessions often necessary on strictly economic grounds. During a very busy season, however, when the pressure of work is at its height, and even moderately experienced workers are hard to find, a woman may secure a temporary position subject to special privileges as to hours. Naturally such a person is the first to be discharged when a reduction in force becomes desirable. Exceptional cases may, however, be found. In a factory employing from 75 to 125 people, there is one married woman with three children, who has held her position for over two years. She has Monday as well as Sunday at home, and leaves work at five o'clock every afternoon. In this case there are two reasons for her retention. One is the rapidity with which she works, which enables her in her shorter hours of employment to turn out nearly the normal amount of work for those working full time, and the second is the fact that the contractor has been somewhat affected by certain exceptionally pathetic features of the case. It is far from desirable, however, that variations in shop requirements should be made in individual cases. How-

ever much such concessions may prove to the advantage of a few women, it is on the whole fortunate that they are rare, and that conditions of employment are generally rigid. Even if economically justified, such discriminations are regarded as favors, and a situation in which the contractor is extending favors is morally unhealthy.

The following table shows the actual wages received by the women employees in the different lines of work in the coat, pants and vest shops, as recorded in Tables E, F, G and H. In preparing this table, I have omitted three classes of women that formerly appeared: first, all women not employed in the shops, but taking work out to be done in their homes; second, all women working in the shops who are paid by the piece, and whose actual weekly earnings were not stated; third, all women related to the contractor to whom no wages are actually paid, and the value of whose services was merely estimated. The women represented in this table, therefore, are those working in the shops and factories, either paid the regular weekly wages recorded, or paid by the piece, but earning generally the sum stated. In the latter case, when the earnings were given as ranging from one sum to another, the average is always taken. The index figure attached to the different rates of wages shows in each case the number of women receiving the wages. The record for the factory reported in Table H has been given separately, as it is especially significant. Figures for its employees are not included in the general averages.

TABLE I.—Wages of Women in the Ready-Made Clothing Trade.

Coats.

Edge-basting.		Basting around Armholes.	Basting Sleeves.	Basting Canvas.		Padding Lapels.	Padding Collars.	Tacking.				Felling.		Making Buttonholes by Hand.	Sewing on Buttons.		Bushel-ing.
Jew.	Ger.	Jew.	Ital.	Jew.	Ital.	Ital.	Ital.	Jew.	Ger.	Lith.	Ital.	Jew.	Ital.	Ital.	Jew.	Ital.	Jew.
8.00[3] 9.00	5.00 6.00[2]	5.00 7.00 10.00	6.00 7.00	8.00[2]	4.00 5.00	4.00[2] 4.50[2]	4.50[2]	6.00[8] 7.00[2] 9.00	7.00	6.00[5]	5.00[2] 6.00[2]	4.50[3] 5.25[2] 6.00[7] 6.25 6.75[2] 7.00[6] 8.00[2]	4.00[4] 4.75[11] 5.00[6] 6.00	11.00[3]	4.00 5.00[2] 6.00[2] 7.00[8] 7.50	5.00[3] 7.50	10.00[2]
8.33[3]	5.67[2]	7.33[3]	6.50[2]	8.00[2]	4.50[2]	4.25[4]	4.50[2]	6.45[11]	7.00[1]	6.00[5]	5.50[4]	6.25[22]	4.74[22]	11.00[3]	6.39[14]	5.63[4]	10.00[2]

Pants.

Operating.	Basting.	Trim-ming.	Tacking.		Overcasting.		Finishing.		Buttonhole Operating.	Sewing on Buttons.	Buttons by Machine.	Busheling.		
Ger.	Ger.	Ger.	Jew.	Ger.	Jew.	Ger.	Jew.	Ital.	Ital.	Ger.	Ital.	Jew.	Ger.	Ital.
6.00 7.50 9.25[8]	4.50 5.00 6.00 6.75[10]	5.00	5.00	6.00[5]	10.50	4.75 8.50	4.00[4] 4.50[10]	4.50[20]	5.00	4.00[2]	5.00 8.00	6.00	7.00	3.00 4.00 5.00[2] 6.00 8.00
8.54[7]	6.38[12]	5.00[1]	5.00[1]	6.00[8]	10.50[1]	6.63[2]	4.36[14]	4.50[20]	5.00[1]	4.00[2]	6.50[2]	6.00[1]	7.00[1]	5.17[6]

TABLE I.—WAGES OF WOMEN IN THE READY-MADE CLOTHING TRADE.—*Concluded.*

Vests.

Cutting Backs.	Making Backs.	Joining Backs.	Making Pockets.	Sewing in Pockets.	Helping Operators.	Basting.	Turning Over.	Finishing.			Busheling.
Ger.	Ger.	Ger.	Ger.	Ger.	Jew.	Jew.	Ger.	Jew.	Ger.	Ital.	Ger.
2.50 5.50	6.00	7.50	8.00	7.50[3]	6.00[6] 10.50[4] 12.00[5]	5.00[4] 6.00[2] 8.50[4] 10.00[7]	3.75[2]	4.00 5.00[2] 6.00[3] 9.00[2]	4.50[3]	0.00 6.00	5.00
4.00[2]	6.00[1]	7.50[1]	8.00[1]	7.50[3]	9.20[15]	8.00[17]	3.75[2]	6.25[8]	4.50[3]	3.00[2]	5.00[1]

Coats, Pants and Vests.

	Jew.	German.	Italian.	Lithuanian.	All Nationalities.
Number of women recorded	115	49	74	6	244
Average wage when working	$6.90	$6.29	$5.06	$6.00	$6.17

Coat Factory, No. 47. (Not included in tables given above.)

	No. of Italians.	Class of Work.	Wages.	Average Wage.
	5	Basting edges.	$3.25, $4.50[2], $4.75, $6.00.	$4.60[5]
	7	Basting in sleeves, and tacking lining and canvas.	$1.50, $2.00, $3.00, $3.25[2], $3.75, $5.50.	3 18[7]
	7	Padding lapels.	$1.50[2], $1.75, $2.75, $3.25, $3.50, $4.00.	2.61[7]
	1	Sewing sleeve lining.	$3.50.	3.50[1]
Total	20	....	....	3.35[20]

If one is interested in the actual rates of wages in different grades of employment, the figures given above are significant. The average wages for the whole group of women, and for the women divided according to nationality, are less to be relied upon. The different classes of workers may be represented by numbers of cases out of proportion to their relative importance in the whole body of clothing workers. For example, three Italian women are here scheduled as earning eleven dollars a week by making buttonholes by hand. That fact is verifiable, but it is by no means true that hand buttonhole makers form in general three seventy-fourths of all Italian shop workers, and the average wage is consequently unduly raised by their presence. As there is no means of knowing exactly what proportion of the whole number of women in the ready-made clothing trade each separate class forms, the figures cannot be weighted. A second fact to be kept in mind in respect to the averages by nationality is that a number of German women who are doing a high grade of work in the family shops are not here represented, because they receive no wages. Yet if employed by outside contractors, they would appear among the more highly paid employees. The total number of cases observed is too small to prevent important variations in the average occurring through these special influences. No elaborate deductions should, therefore, be drawn from them.

In a general way, however, and if not used for close comparisons, these averages may be accepted. But it must not be forgotten that they represent merely the average wage received for a full week's work, while employment is far from steady. There are a few factories, it is true, that employ the majority of their employees regularly throughout the year. But in gen-

eral, trade is dull during several months of the year, and the majority of the shops run then on either half time or less. While not all establishments run the same number of months, it is generally estimated that an employee in the clothing trade can expect to have work about two-thirds of the year, by which is meant full employment for perhaps six months and two or three days a week the rest of the time. On this basis we find that our average wage for the Jewish girl is reduced to $4.60 per week for the entire year; for the German to $4.19; for the Lithuanian to $4.00; and for the Italian to $3.37. The average weekly wage throughout the year for the total number of women is $4.11.

One of the most striking things in Table I is the great variation, sometimes amounting to 100 or 200 per cent., to be found in the wages paid women doing the same class of work. Frequently these differences in wages are found in one shop. Occasionally they indicate that the work, while nominally of the same class, in reality demands different degrees of skill. Usually, however, the differences in wages correspond accurately to differences in speed on the part of the workers, and is the most direct measure of ability. Very rarely does the difference indicate the exploitation of the more poorly paid workers.

Coat factory No. 47 is a large establishment with admirable sanitary arrangements and properly restricted hours of labor. It is presented here, however, not as typical of any large number of factories, but as showing the very lowest wage-rates for women employees to be found in the ready-made clothing industry in New York city. Ordinarily $2.50 or $3.00 is regarded as the minimum in shops, even for young girls. Here the wage

run considerably lower. Even so, however, it is not clear that the employment of these girls is actually cheaper for the employer than would be that of more skilled workers.[1]

A question of interest in connection with that of wages concerns the length of time required for learning the trade. In the millinery trade, as is generally known, girls frequently spend some weeks of apprenticeship before earning anything; and an abuse, of which much is heard, consists in the dismissal of such girls as soon as they demand wages. Nothing of this kind occurs in the ready-made clothing trade. I found, it is true, one case, which appears in the schedule, in which an Italian girl was earning nothing. Such instances are extremely rare, even when, as in this case, it is the girl's first week in the shop. Usually an inexperienced girl receives $1.00 or $1.50 for her first week's work at felling or sewing on buttons, and in a few weeks is earning as much as some ever receive. As we have noticed, some women earn three times as much as others at such work. It is not so much length of service as natural quickness and concentration of attention that are of importance. This is less true in other branches of the work. A skilled buttonhole maker tells me that it was three months before she could make buttonholes sufficiently good for the coats she now works on, and that it was even a year before she attained her maximum speed. In this branch there is no demand for any work except the best, as the lower and middle grades of clothing have machine-made buttonholes. The following record shows the experience of one German pants operator and is fairly typical for that

[1] This establishment was investigated also by agents of the Industrial Commission, and their judgment supports this conclusion. See *Report of Industrial Commission*, vol. xv, p. 366.

class of work. This girl, after having done a little work at felling in her home, entered a shop at sixteen. The first week her work consisted of basting pants, running errands, and the like, and her wages were $1.50. The second week she received $2.00, the third $2.50. Soon she was put at a machine (foot power), and her wages, which were paid by the week, gradually increased, until by the end of the first year she was earning $7.50 per week when employed every day. She continued at this wage for over a year. Then she began to work by the piece, and earned as high as $8.50 and $9.00 per week when work was abundant.

There remains for discussion one more question in respect to wages, that of the relative wages of men and women. As we have seen, there are few cases where a direct comparison can be made, as the division of work in the New York clothing trade, to a large extent, follows sex lines. In Table I three Jewish edge-basters are noted, two of whom earn $8.00 per week and one $9.00. Formerly women edge-basters were more common in the Jewish shops. They have now been largely superseded by men earning $11.00 or $12.00 a week to their $7.00, $8.00 or $9.00, but the piece rates, or task rates (as the case might be), have remained at least nominally the same. In the case of operators I can cite conditions in three shops, one of which appears as No. 37 in Table F. In this instance five women and five men are engaged as operators on pants. All work at the same piece rates, ten to sixteen cents a pair, but the earnings of the women are from $8.00 to $10.50 per week while the men earn from $10.00 to $12.00. The other cases referred to are similar. The women are Jewish coat-operators and work at the same piece rates as the men in the same shops, but their weekly wages in

both cases average $3.00 less. No direct discrimination against women as such is to be noted. While it is quite true that Jewish workmen do not look with favor upon the entrance of women into the more highly-skilled part of the work, yet Jewish contractors are usually ready to give a place to a skilled woman operator at the same piece rates as to men. They would, for obvious reasons, usually be less ready to teach the work to a woman.

We will pass now from questions of work, hours, and wages, to those more closely connected with the personality of these women workers. From this point of view nothing is more significant than nationality. With the exception of an occasional Lithuanian or Pole, the women are divided into Germans, Jews and Italians. For purposes of convenience, however, a somewhat different grouping is desirable. Comparatively few home-workers are now found among the Germans or Jews, and the classes, as we actually come in contact with them, consist of the Germans, who are found in the pants and vest shops in Brooklyn, the Jewish and Italian girls, together with an occasional Italian married woman, in the Jewish shops in Manhattan, and the Italian home-workers.

The differences between the various nationalities in their attitude towards women and towards women's industrial activity have been productive of some interesting results. For example, a glance through the records of the family shops makes it apparent that work is for the German girl often as much a matter of course as for her brother, and her prospect of continuing it through life is almost the same. Men and women alike among the Germans regard the industrial activity of daughter, sister, wife or mother with respectful seriousness, and expect that, when possible, family arrangements will be made to conform to it more or less.

There are two broad classes in the group usually referred to as Germans. The first and smaller class consists of the Germans proper, those who were born in Germany and who, in most cases, came to this country many years ago. Two such women, who have been working on pants and vests here for thirty and thirty-six years respectively, are fairly typical for the group. Neither of them speaks English. One married a pants-maker and has helped him in the shop ever since. Their son and two daughters also work in the shop, but the father has absolute control of all the money that comes in. The other woman learned from her father to make vests thirty-six years ago. After her marriage she continued to make them in her home and still makes them, now, however, in the employ of her son.

The second class mentioned above includes the younger women, chiefly those born in this country of German parentage, but also some who came to this country as children fifteen or twenty years ago. This is a much larger group. Most of them have been educated either in public or in parochial schools and speak English well. Yet they cling close to German customs. They remain in school until they are thirteen or fourteen years of age, and then do some kind of light work, either at home or in their fathers' shops. Occasionally they work for a time as domestic servants. One rarely finds any young German girls in factories. By the time they are eighteen they are ready to undertake such work as basting or operating. They are strong and steady workers, and manage foot-power machines as frequently as those run by mechanical power. No matter how large the wages of these girls may be, they are usually handed over unquestioningly to the parents. One incident, told me by a German-American pants-operator, illustrates the ex-

treme rigidity of this rule. She had for two years been earning $7.00 or $8.00 a week, which she had always surrendered to her parents. Three months before her approaching marriage she suggested to her mother that she would like to pay board and use the rest of her money to purchase clothes. As she expressed it, "My mother beat me in the presence of my future husband, and asked me who had paid board for me when I was little."

It is quite common for the German woman to continue at her trade after marriage, or to learn it then if she marries a small contractor. Children sometimes cause a temporary interruption of the work. If the husband has a shop, however, it is likely to be near home, sometimes in a building just behind the house or only around the corner. In this case the children are frequently left in charge of the grandmother, while the mother goes to work, returning home as she wishes. If the husband is in some other business, it is less easy to arrange matters. In this case the wife may remain at home and either make vests there (for there are still a few cases in which this work is done at home), or take out some finishing work from the shop. There are now comparatively few German finishers, however, since they are unwilling to accept the rates of pay established by the Italians. Even when the wife does this work, the importance of the grandmother is not to be overlooked. She either lives with the family and helps in the care of the child and the house, or she is a convenient haven of refuge to which the children are sent when an especially heavy batch of work comes in. It is of course true that some German women in the clothing trade cease industrial activity entirely upon marriage. These, however, are the ones that are not encountered in an investigation of this kind.

Occasionally a German woman remains unmarried. One shop was found of which an unmarried German woman about thirty-five years old was the head. She employed her father and mother, as well as two or three women from outside. It would be interesting to know whether even such complete reversal of ordinary family relations was sufficient to establish financial independence for the daughter. All that was learned was that neither father, mother nor daughter received wages. There was evidently a feeling of sensitiveness on the subject of the daughter's leadership.

Among the Jews the situation is radically different. The period of industrial activity of a Jewish woman is normally a short one. Few Jewish girls enter the trade before they reach the age of sixteen, as up to that time the parents make every effort to keep them in school. When the Jewish girl enters the shop she, as well as her parents, regards the work as a temporary makeshift, bridging over the period intervening before her marriage. For this reason she is usually contented to confine herself to the simplest lines of work, though, as we have seen, there are some skillful Jewish girls earning $8.00 and $10.00 a week as vest-basters. The Jewish girls are quick and intelligent, but their work is by no means their primary interest.

They continue to live at home, but they have under these circumstances a greater degree of freedom in the spending of their income than is common among either German or Italian girls. It is difficult to make general statements on the subject, as among the Jews there are wide differences in this respect. The financial relations within the family are not on a business footing. I have never known a case where the daughter paid a definite sum for board. Sometimes the girl hands over her

money regularly to her parents, but it is not unusual to find her retaining practically all her earnings to expend on clothes. Here again comes in the family recognition of marriage as the chief end toward which all efforts are directed. But this influence is reinforced by quite a different one. It is not only true that the parents sympathize to a certain extent with the purposes animating the daughter, but it is equally true that the younger generation of lower east-side Jews is quite capable of ignoring parental advice and influence if a strong incentive is present. This phase of the influence of American life upon the Jewish people is brought conspicuously to the attention of all philanthropic workers. The child of the Jewish immigrant, after learning English in the public schools and becoming accustomed to American thoughts and ways, seems cut off from the older generation, and rapidly loses the respect and consideration for his parents which has been characteristic of Jewish family relations. On the other hand, the parents, unfamiliar with the language, and imbued with more or less of a feeling of helplessness under strange conditions, come to depend, to a great extent, upon the children. This is a reversal of normal family relations. The result is an unusual development of independent initiative on the part of the young Jewish shop girl. She desires and makes larger expenditures for personal adornment than either the Italian or the German girl, and her share in the maintenance of the family is consequently less.

It is also true that the prevalent feeling among the Jewish men is not one that regards as desirable any particular reliance upon women's labor. The Jewish girl marries after a few years of shop life, and never returns to industrial work again unless under exceptional condi-

tions of family need. Formerly the Jewish married woman sometimes assisted her husband in his home shop, or did finishing at home. Since the home shops have disappeared, and since the Italian women have established a lower rate of pay for finishing than the Jewish women are generally willing to accept, both these forms of employment have practically ceased. On the other hand, the Jewish man is unwilling to have his wife go out to the shop or factory to work, and will toil to an unlimited extent himself rather than permit this degradation of the family life.

With the Italians the situation is still different. They are less ambitious for education than the Jews, and the Italian girl enters the shop a year or two earlier. They are also ready with their fingers, and, like the Jewesses, quickly pick up the work. They are said by their employers to be somewhat quieter and steadier. They too live at home, but their earnings are more often added to the family funds than expended upon themselves. The matter is in this case one for family, not personal, decision. Marriage does not necessarily sever their connection with the shop. Ordinarily they leave for a few months, perhaps trying work at home, and then in some cases return to the shop, saying that they like that better. Sometimes, however, their absence is still shorter. Two girls recently came under my notice who married evidently with the intention of remaining in the shop; for both of them obtained permission to be away for a week, two days before the wedding and four after, and at the end of that period returned to their usual places. This aroused no feeling of disapprobation among their companions, either men or women, as it would surely have done among the Jews. Occasionally, however, Italian men of a somewhat more prosperous

class than the one into which these girls usually marry, have a feeling of pride in the matter. I know of one young woman, who formerly sewed on buttons in a Jewish shop, whose husband, a mason earning good wages, opposed her desire to return to work. Among the Italians it is not marriage so much as the bearing of children that interferes with shop work. It is an unusual thing to find married women with young children working away from home. Since such women form at present a relatively large proportion of the Italians in New York, the married Italian women in the shops, while conspicuous in comparison with the same class among the Jews, are after all not very numerous.

The following records are typical of the general situation of perhaps 90 per cent. of these Italian shop girls. Location and length of residence vary, of course, to some extent. Few of the girls, however, have been in this country more than four or five years, and many less than that, while all live in some one of the Italian districts.

1. Sara ——, No. —— Elizabeth Street, third floor front, was born in Southern Italy. She has lived in this country four years, always in New York City, and always on Elizabeth Street. She is twenty years old and looks healthy. She speaks English a little, and can write her name. She is a Catholic. She is employed in a shop at pants finishing, but does not know the name of the street or the number of the shop. She will, however, direct one to it. During the one year that she has been at work she has been employed in several different shops. For her first week's work she received $2.00, aud now earns on the average $3.00 to $3.50 per week when working full time. Her highest wages for a week are $5.00, which she has rarely attained. She is paid at piece rates, 4½ to 6 cents per pair, according to the amount of work required. The shop opens at eight and closes at six, sometimes running one-half hour overtime. She goes home to lunch when she wishes to. Sunday is a holiday. She has steady work for seven or eight months, and the rest of the year it is irregular. She goes to the shop every morning to see whether the "boss" has work. If there is

none, she returns to her home. She prefers working in the shop to sewing at home, because she can earn more and "it is livelier." Her wages are paid regularly every Thursday and she has never had any difficulty in obtaining them. Whatever she earns she gives to her mother. She lives at home with her father, mother, brother, a sister of nineteen, and two younger sisters. The family occupies four rooms, the rent of which is $16.00 a month. Her brother is a barber, earning $5.00 per week. Her father sells lemons, making sometimes from $1.00 to $1.50 a day, sometimes nothing. Her mother earns about $1.50 a week by finishing pants at home. The oldest of her sisters works in the shop with her, and the two youngest are in school.

2. Rosina —— is the sister of the preceding girl. Except that she is a year younger, her record is the same. This is a comparatively prosperous family for the neighborhood, as it contains five wage-earners. The most striking evidence of prosperity is the fact that it occupies four rooms.

3. Rosina ——, No. —— Elizabeth Street, first floor front, was born in Sicily. She has lived in this country four years, always on Elizabeth Street. She doesn't know her age, but it is probably about nineteen. She appears to be healthy. She can write her name, and she speaks English so as to be easily understood. She is a Catholic. She is employed in a shop at pants finishing. She has done this work for four years, that is, ever since she came to this country. Nobody taught her the work before she went to the shop, and she earned almost as much at first as she does now. She makes about $3.50 or $4.00 a week on piece work, at 4 to 5 cents per pair of pants. The shop opens at seven and closes at six, with one hour at noon for lunch. She eats this in the shop, and does not go out. She has a half-holiday on Saturday, and no work on Sunday. The shop closes also on Jewish holidays. When work is slack she goes to the shop only on the days the "boss" directs. Wages are paid once a week, and she never has trouble in getting them. She doesn't have as much work as she would like, however, but has never done any other work. She gives everything she earns to her mother. She lives at home with her father, mother, brother (ten years old), and two sisters. The family pays $11.00 a month for two rooms. The father is lame and can earn nothing. The brother and younger sister go to school. The mother finishes pants at home.

4. Giuseppa —— is the sister of the preceding girl. She is a year older, but cannot write her name, and speaks English very slightly. In other respects her record is like her sister's. Her earnings also go to her mother, and the two sisters practically support the family. Both girls are anxious to work full time, and left their last place because there was not work enough.

5. Serai ——, No. —— Elizabeth Street, fourth floor rear, was born in Southern Italy. She has lived in this country four years, all the time on Elizabeth Street. She is fifteen years old, looks strong, and can neither write nor speak English at all. She is a Catholic. She is a busheler in a pants shop, "two blocks past Mott Street." She has been at work for six months, always in one shop. She is paid $3.50 per week when the shop is running full time. She begins work at seven and stops at six, having a half-hour for lunch, which she eats in the shop. There is no work overtime, and no work on Sunday. She gets her wages regularly every week, and gives them to her mother. She lives at home with the father, mother, and three younger children, one of whom is of school age. They pay $9.50 a month for two rooms. The father is a day laborer.

The independent Jewish or Italian girl working in the coat, pants or vest shops, paying her board, and maintaining herself from the balance of her earnings, is largely a dream of the investigator. Whether or not it would be possible for a girl to do this under existing conditions is chiefly an academic question, with no practical bearing upon the real situation. The point that repeatedly emphasizes itself in the experience of any one familiar with the circumstances surrounding the Jewish and Italian shop-girls in the clothing trade is that there are practically none of them who would even consider doing this. They are born into certain relationships, and these determine absolutely the conditions of their lives. It is useless to speculate about what an Italian girl would do if thrown entirely upon her own resources. If her parents die, she becomes a member of her brother's or sister's family, with no definite financial arrangements. If they also should perish, there still remain cousins, or even people from the same Italian town. In the last extremity there are always friends who will send her back to Italy to live among her town's people for the rest of her life. Among the Jews it is only rarely possible to find unmarried women in this trade who have been left alone in the world by the death of their parents, or who do not choose

to become part of the family of some relative. In these unusual cases their difficulty seems to be connected rather more with finding a suitable lodging than with maintaining themselves on their meagre earnings. I know of one such girl who paid $1.00 a week for a lounge in the kitchen of a neighbor, the husband and wife occupying the adjoining room. "Furnished rooms" are not easily to be obtained by respectable girls in the Jewish quarter of the city, and no rooms bearing such a sign are safe for girls to engage. The small demand for lodgings for working women in this part of the city, resulting from the fact that practically all of them live with parents or relations, makes it extremely difficult for a single woman to provide for herself in the few cases when she might wish to do so.

We have discussed the general character of the work performed by women in clothing shops and factories, their hours of labor, and their wages. Some consideration has been given also to the personal differences found among the women of the different nationalities, and to their general family relationships. To the group of women that is numerically most important, the home finishers, no attention has as yet been paid. In the succeeding chapter we shall pass, therefore, from the workers in the shops and factories to those who are laboring on coats and pants in their homes.

CHAPTER V

THE ITALIAN FINISHERS IN THEIR HOMES

"No room or apartment in any tenement or dwelling house, or in a building situated in the rear of any tenement or dwelling house, shall be used for the purpose of manufacturing, altering, repairing, or finishing therein, any coats, vests, knee-pants, trowsers, overalls unless a license is secured therefor, as provided in this article."[1] This provision took effect September 1, 1899. It is of importance to three classes of workers in the clothing trade. These are the custom tailors, who manufacture clothing in the small shops back of their stores, which are located chiefly in buildings that are in part rented for homes; the contractors of ready-made clothing who run shops in rear buildings; and the people who work on garments in their homes.

The accompanying maps are based upon the applications for licenses made at the office of the Factory Inspector in New York city, between the date of the passage of the law and May, 1901. The law had then been in force for one year and eight months, a sufficient period of time for a knowledge of its provisions to have spread quite thoroughly among the people affected by them. Up to that time 16,741 applications for licenses had been received from people engaged in the clothing trade. I originally entered upon a complete map of

[1] Amendment to the Labor Law as made by *New York State Laws of 1899*, c. 191.

New York a record of each of these applications according to the block from which it came. In making the record two facts became apparent: first, that applications for licenses to manufacture clothing had been received from approximately one-half the blocks in the Borough of Manhattan; and second, that this apparently wide diffusion of the industry was due to the existence of the custom clothing shops. These are found, two or three in a block, on almost all the avenues from Houston street to the Harlem river, except those used exclusively for residence purposes. A similar condition was observed in Brooklyn. As the custom clothing shops are so scattered, they do not appear on these maps. Only those blocks are marked from which twenty or more applications for licenses had been received. A second difference between the original maps and the present ones is found in the fact that while the first showed the diffusion of the trade, the ones here given present more closely its concentration.

In the maps before us, only two classes of people are given fair representation, the contractors having shops in rear buildings, and the home workers. With reference to the number of applications required, two shops employing perhaps fifty or sixty men would balance only two houses, in each of which one woman might be at work. When this is kept in mind, it becomes clear that the shops can have had little influence in determining the areas of concentration, and that what the maps in reality show with precision is the location of the vast army of women who are employed in their homes in finishing clothing. They cannot, however, be said to represent the exact number of these homes at any specific moment. Since all applications were recorded, it undoubtedly happened that some women, who changed

their residences, appeared more than once, and that others, to whom licenses were refused, abandoned the work. These influences, however, have probably had a comparatively slight effect in altering the proportion of homes devoted to this work in different localities, as the whole number of cases under consideration amounts to many thousands.

With the exception of the block bounded by 28th and 29th streets and 2d and 3d avenues, Map C indicates every block in the Borough of Manhattan from which there had been received twenty or more applications for licenses to permit rooms to be used for work on men's clothing. There are 91 of these blocks, if in three cases we count as one block two or three small ones that have been formed by complicated intersections of streets. There are three distinct sections that are especially conspicuous, and a fourth of somewhat less importance. The most marked area of concentration is evidently that including Mulberry, Mott, and Elizabeth streets, and, on the other side of the Bowery, Chrystie and part of Forsyth. This is preëminently the Italian quarter of the city, the settlement in the blocks east of the Bowery having been made recently on an extension of the overcrowded Italian district on the west side.

East of the New Bowery, about two or three blocks from the river front, is another quarter characterized by this home work. This general locality is one that has long been noted for two things, first, the great variety of nationalities represented here, and second, the large amount of drunkenness and disorder that prevails. One might expect, then, to find a radically different group of home workers from the first, a group perhaps formed largely of the wives and daughters of the Irish, Swedish, Danish, Finnish dock hands or sailors. Such is by no

means the case. Investigation shows that every block in this section in which the finishing of clothing is carried on, is a block into which the Italians have been gradually creeping for the last two or three years. In the blocks in which this work most largely flourishes there are now practically no people of other nationalities.

The two remaining sections, the one south of 14th street and east of 2d avenue, and the Goerck and Mangin street quarter, have essentially the same characteristic, that is, a large Italian population. In the former case this has worked its way into a neighborhood partly Irish and more largely German. The blocks here prominent, however, are almost exclusively Italian. In the eastern group of blocks the Italians are on the outskirts of a Jewish locality, but few Jewish finishers are to be found here.

When we turn to the map of Brooklyn, two general facts are seen at once. The volume of home-finishing done in Brooklyn is much inferior to that done in the Borough of Manhattan. While in the latter borough there were two blocks from each of which nearly 400 applications for license had been received, in Brooklyn the largest number from any one block was 104. The second point to be noted is that this smaller amount of work is diffused over a large area. Eighty-eight blocks should appear on this map as against 91 in Manhattan. Only 84 are actually shown, as there are four unimportant blocks in remote parts of the borough that could not easily be introduced.

It is necessary to say but a few words as to the general characteristics of these blocks. While it is undoubtedly true that the appearance in Map D of many of the less conspicuous blocks is due to the existence in them of

considerable numbers of small German shops, those that appear prominent are once more chiefly Italian sections. It was only by diligent search through the records of the Factory Office that licenses could be found for occasional German women. This applies not only to the Knickerbocker and Hamburg Avenue section, but to the Boerum Street and Graham Avenue quarter as well, though in both cases women were taking work chiefly from German shops.

The five blocks in Manhattan from which the largest number of applications for licenses were received (as shown in Map C), the block bounded by Goerck, Mangin, Rivington and Delancey Streets, and two blocks in Brooklyn, one on Boerum street, which ranks first in the Borough, and one bounded by Jefferson, Melrose, Hamburg and Knickerbocker, have been chosen for special study. Numerically the Goerck Street section is less important than some unrepresented ones in Brooklyn, but it is the great center of the coat-finishing work, and has therefore been included. These eight blocks are representative of all the important centers of home work in the clothing trade in this city. In these blocks alone, during the period previously mentioned, more than 1500 separate homes applied for permission to work on men's clothing. I have visited over sixty homes in these blocks, and have prepared schedules from forty-two home finishers, the information in the other cases having been for various reasons incomplete. These reports may be regarded as typical for the conditions prevailing among the home-workers in the men's clothing trade in New York. They form the basis for the following description:

Who are the women that we find engaged in this work? Wherever they exist in large numbers we may be sure that they are Italians, Here and there you may find a Jewish, a German, or a German-American woman, and I discovered one English woman. Such workers, however, are scattered through certain localities, one in a whole tenement house perhaps, while among the Italians may be found blocks that are practically colonies of home finishers. The five women not Italians that appear in my records hold a position wholly out of proportion to their numerical importance in the group as a whole. Our study, then, is chiefly of Italian women, and in a large part of it they alone will be considered.

Comparatively little is known of these women and of their families. Their language forms the first barrier between themselves and the Americans. There are no large organized philanthropic bodies working among them and studying their situation as there are among the Jewish people. Social settlements have as yet brought but few students into their midst, and even the hand of the government investigator has touched them but lightly. I may, therefore, be permitted to describe somewhat in detail their homes and their lives.

Probably one-half of these Italian women are Sicilians, and of the remainder a large share come from the extreme southern part of the Italian peninsula. They belong, then, to that class of Italian immigrants generally regarded with least favor as illiterate, poor, and unskilled. In this opinion the Italians from even a little further north concur, the Neapolitans, for example, speaking with great contempt of the Sicilians. They do not, however, seem stupid, but quick and alert. Their children who are in school speak English with varying degrees of fluency, and the young girls in the clothing

shops pick it up to some extent. The home-workers, however, whose contact with Americans is very slight, rarely speak or understand English. Of 37 Italian home-finishers, 29, or more than three-fourths, knew no English whatever. With only one of the whole number was it possible to hold a simple conversation in that language, while the other seven could understand a few words, but were unable to express even the most ordinary thoughts without constant recourse to pantomime or to Italian.

Only nine of the whole number of Italian women could write their names. In most of these instances their knowledge of writing did not extend much further. There was one Sicilian woman, however, who was quite well educated, and not only read the letters received by her neighbors, but also in many cases wrote their replies. In four cases the ability to write was combined with a faint perception of the meaning of a limited number of English words,—otherwise the two forms of knowledge were quite distinct. As a whole the Neapolitan group on Goerck street presented a somewhat better record in these respects than did the Italians from further south. In general, however, the knowledge both of writing and of the spoken English language possessed by these women is so slight as to make it unprofitable to compare it for purposes of explanation with length of residence, age, children of school age, or other similar facts. The only two instances where the ability to write in Italian or to speak English is sufficient to be of any practical value whatever, except possibly in connection with the daily visits to the pants shops, are cases that are to be explained by no such influences.

The following table shows the general facts concerning the length of residence in this country, age, conjugal condition, and number of children of these women, and also the composition of the different families:

TABLE J.—ITALIAN HOME-FINISHERS.

Length of Residence in the United States.		Age.		Conjugal Condition.		Number of Children at Home.		Composition of the Families.	
Number of Years.	Number of Cases.	Age Periods.	Number of Cases.	Classes.	Number of Cases.	Age Periods.	Number of Children.	Class.	Number of Cases.
1 or under.	8	Under 21	10	Single.	1	Under 5	28	Women finishers.	37
2	9	21–31	17	Married.	33	5–14	26	Their husbands.	33
3–4	9	Over 31	10	Widowed.	3	Over 14	18	Their children.	72
5–6	3							All others.	18
7–8	5								
9	1								
13	2								
All periods.	37	All periods.	37	All classes.	37	All periods.	72	All classes.	160

The facts here presented with regard to residence are such as one would naturally expect. In all cases but one, the entire time since the arrival of the family in this country had been spent in New York City. The exception was a woman who had lived for a short time in New Orleans, where her husband had worked on the quays. None of the people expressed any regret for having come here, nor was there, in general, any thought of returning to Italy. It is evident that it is the purpose of these people to become permanent citizens, except when, for some reason, they meet with special misfortunes. One deserted wife plans to return to her relations in Sicily, and one woman whose husband has died, intends to go back. All that prosper stay.

In respect to age, it should be stated that none of the women interviewed were under sixteen. The columns showing conjugal condition are perhaps the most significant in the table. It is evident that home work in this trade is exclusively the resort of married women. The one apparent exception is easily explained. The girl in question is keeping house for her brother and helpless mother. If the mother were able-bodied, the daughter would probably be found in a clothing shop. The three widows appearing in the table all have children.

The total number of children may appear somewhat small, when the generally large families of the Italians are taken into account. In explanation of this several facts may be considered. First, eight of the married women have no children at all. They are chiefly those under twenty-one, who have been recently married. Second, there are also several young married women whose families are as yet not large. Third, in the case of the older women no record was made of children other than those living at home. The distribution of children may appear

more clearly in the statement that out of 28 families in which there were children, there were 2 with 5 children each, 5 with 4, and 5 with 3, the remainder having only 1 or 2 each. Of the children between 5 and 14 years of age, all but 5 were in school. Two of these had only just passed their fifth birthday. One girl over 7 years old was not in school because, as her mother said complainingly, there was no room for her. Two girls over 12 were working. One of these had been in a factory for a week, but had been discharged because she was too small. She, as well as the other child of about the same age, was helping her mother at finishing pants. These were the only cases of child-labor on men's clothing that I saw or heard of in the tenements. I am convinced that there are few.

Another point of some interest in relation to the matter of overcrowding and the possibility of maintaining conditions of cleanliness in the house, is that of the total size of the family, including under that term all the people occupying a tenement in common. I found 4 cases out of 34 households where the husband and wife had the two-room tenement entirely to themselves, a larger percentage than public opinion recognizes. The other extreme was presented by a single case in which ten people, including a man and his wife, five children, the man's mother, and his aunt and uncle occupied two rooms. In all cases but one the people in the tenement in addition to the man and his wife and children were relatives, usually mothers, brothers or sisters. In the exceptional case the outsider was a girl friend, but it was easy to provide accommodations for her, as the tenement contained four rooms. In the 34 households under observation, the families contained on the average 4¾ persons each.

We will pass now from the consideration of the personal characteristics of the Italian finishers and their family relationships, to the subject of the homes in which this work is carried on. The typical Italian home, in whatever section of New York you may search, is the two-room tenement. Such was the case in 29 out of 37 instances. The larger room of the two, which is used as kitchen, dining-room, and general living-room, possesses two windows through which the room is in general fairly well lighted. On those lots where there is a rear tenement building the supply of light both for the rooms in this building and for the back rooms in the front building is generally less satisfactory. The smaller room, which is used as a bed-room, is not lighted from outside at all, but has a little window opening into the public hall-way, which in turn has no opening for light and air between the first floor and the roof. Less light, therefore, comes through this window than from the adjoining room, which must also be depended upon for whatever ventilation is secured. The resulting conditions can easily be imagined. The furniture of the living-room consists generally of a stove, table, a few chairs, sometimes a shelf, with varied articles on it, a few cooking utensils, some dishes, and images or pictures of the saints. Before the last are frequently placed artificial flowers or candles, for all these women are Catholics. In four of the living-rooms beds were found, and in the same number, cots. That these did not appear more frequently was doubtless due to the orders of the factory inspectors, for in several other cases it was evident that these rooms served at night as bed-rooms.

It is obvious that it is a difficult task to keep clean and in order two rooms such as have been described, used for such varied purposes, situated usually in old and long-

used buildings, and occupied on the average by about five people. The fact that one of the rooms has no direct access to either light or air enhances the difficulty. It must be recognized also that the standard of cleanliness of most of these people is not high. But it would be unfair to permit the impression to remain that all of these tenements are in an equally disagreeable condition. I found three homes where the rooms were kept in as good order and as clean as one could possibly expect under such discouraging circumstances. On the other hand, there were some where the conditions were as bad as could well be imagined, and in several of these, clothing was being manufactured under the protection of a license.

CHAPTER VI

WORK, WAGES AND EXPENSES OF THE HOME FINISHERS.

HAVING considered the Italian finishers and their homes, let us now examine the relation of the women to the work that they perform. Usually the work is obtained from some shop or factory not far from the home. In nearly three-fourths of the cases the distance is less than a quarter of a mile, while in the remainder it is not much in excess of that. Three-fourths of the women go for the work themselves, and it is a common thing in these districts to meet Italian women on the street, balancing twenty pairs of pants on their heads. Occasionally the husband, brother or son obtains the work, but this is usually only when the woman is not in good health. The children sometimes state plainly that they are ashamed to get the work. I found five women to whom the work was sent from the shop. Two of the five paid nothing for this service. They were doing an exceptionally fine class of finishing on the best grade of ready-made coats and pants, and it was evident that it was to the interest of the employer to make some concessions, as the places of the women could not be readily filled. Probably neither of them would have consented to go for the work in person. The remaining three cases were all among the coat finishers on Goerck street. Work was sent to one woman whenever she was unable to go for it. The other two paid a boy to bring them work, each giving him from ten to fifteen

cents a day. These were women ashamed to carry the work through the streets. One of them was the most rapid finisher that I have ever found, and made the highest average wages.

About one-half the women go or send for work daily. The others are usually either those who do rather less work, and so do not need to get it so frequently, or those who carry unusually heavy loads. Daily visits sometimes mean also that not enough work is ready for the women to last them more than a few hours. This inability to obtain work when calling for it, and the uncertainty as to when it may be secured, are among the most serious disadvantages under which the home work is carried on. The women taking work from the German contractors in some of the small shops in Brooklyn report that the work is usually ready for them. The women to whom work is sent also have no difficulty. Five other women state definitely that if there is any work they find it ready for them, and otherwise are told to return the next day. Two or three women refuse to wait for work, and come home at once if they fail to find it. But the majority of these women are seriously handicapped by the weary hours of time spent at the shop in the hope of securing work. A delay of from one to two hours is quite the normal thing, and it is by no means uncommon for the women to stay two or three hours, and then return home with no work. I know of one case where the whole day was spent in this way. It is difficult to conceive of any circumstances under which such an arrangement could be necessary, and it certainly entails grave wrongs. Short waits may in some cases be better than a return later for the work, but it seems clear that in the majority of cases it is quite possible to give to the women such

information as will enable them to make a more profitable use of their time than to spend it waiting for hours in the shop, with perhaps nothing but disappointment at the end of the vigil.

The popular impression of the hours of labor of the home workers is far from accurate and is formed usually from extreme cases. Few of these women are actually engaged in sewing on garments for as many hours in the day as the girls in the shops usually work. Two facts combine, however, to extend their labor over a greater length of time, the numerous interruptions and the delays in securing work. In a third of the 37 cases under consideration work was never begun until after eight in the morning, nor continued later than six in the afternoon. In several cases the labor day was considerably shorter than this, and within the limits given came numerous interruptions. To the breaks in the work the women themselves repeatedly called attention. The most frequent statement was that the baby made it impossible to do much. Others spoke of the children, and still others of the house-work. On the other hand, there were six women who, when garments could be obtained, continued to sew until nine or ten o'clock. This seemed to be the extreme limit, and in no case was the supply of work sufficient to make this a regular proceeding. There was no case where the average hours spent in sewing were excessive, though they might be so for a few days at a time; but hours of sewing plus hours of house-work were extreme in several instances.

The only women who were able to get all the work they wanted were those who wanted little, that is, those who were much occupied with other things, and were not to any great extent dependent on the work. Some

work can be secured during almost any week, and women who have time or desire to earn only a dollar or so a week, consequently, have no complaint to make. But all women who desire to spend as much as six hours a day sewing, unite in saying that at times they cannot get as much work as they wish.

Let us consider now the nature of the work itself. The Goerck Street section is the center of the coat finishing work in New York. In all the other quarters studied the pants work is so much the most important as to be practically all that is found. This is partly because there is less finishing work to be done on coats than on pants; partly because a larger proportion of it is done in the shops. We have, then, two kinds of work to consider, that on coats and that on pants. The latter is undertaken by more than twenty, possibly by fifty, home workers to every one found in the former branch of work.

The work done on a coat in the home consists normally of felling the bottom of the coat, felling around the arm-holes and sometimes under the arms, and felling around the collar and cuffs. Sometimes there is extra work on pockets and down the front. The amount of this work done on different coats varies, but its general nature is in all cases the same, the only difference appearing in the relative fineness of the stitches taken.

By "finishing" a pair of pants is usually meant turning up the bottoms of the pants and basting or felling them down, finishing them around the band, and sewing on all buttons, buckles and sometimes extra tapes. In the case of the coat finishers, sewing on buttons does not form part of their work. The work, it is obvious, is such as can be taken up by any woman without previous

special training. Many of the women laughed when asked who taught them. The idea that teaching was necessary seemed absurd. Others replied, "A lady," meaning usually some one doing similar work in a room near by. Still others said, "The boss." In these cases "teaching" meant merely showing what things were to be done and how fine stiches might be necessary. The best grades of coats and pants are, of course, never given out to a woman until she has developed the ability to take perfectly regular fine stitches; but there is no hesitation about entrusting any of the lower grades, on which by far the largest number of people are employed, to an absolutely new hand. The first pair of pants finished is usually done well enough to be accepted and paid for at regular piece rates. Practice brings greater speed, but the maximum is soon reached.

We come now to the important question of the wages received for the work. So much attention has been drawn to the extremely small sums of money earned weekly by the home finishers that a careful analysis of the situation is desirable. All work is of course paid for at piece rates. Two things then are to be sharply distinguished: first, the actual payment per piece and the real labor time necessary to complete the work; and second, the weekly earnings secured. The first point is commonly underemphasized.

I found rates per piece for finishing ready-made coats varying from 3½ to 14 cents, and these prices can hardly be regarded as the extremes. Finishers are usually found working on coats for which they receive from 5 to 7 cents. It takes the average woman from forty-five minutes to an hour to do the required work on a 5 or 5½-cent coat. Wages for this class of workers may fairly be said to average from 5 to 6 cents

an hour for the time actually employed. There are, of course, variations according to ability. I have found no woman at this work who was unable to finish a 5-cent coat in an hour. On the other hand the extreme limit of speed seems to be that which will accomplish double the work in the same time, though I have found one woman, regarded almost with awe by her slower companions, who, when she secures a certain grade of 3½-cent coats, can finish four in an hour, and thus earn 14 cents. She never works many hours a day.

The situation among the pants workers is much the same, but the actual earnings per hour may average slightly less. Piece rates of wages for finishing ready-made pants range from 7 cents a dozen pairs for sewing on buttons on boys' knee-pants to 20 cents a pair for the work on a high grade of goods. Even these figures probably do not indicate the extremes. Most of the work done, however, is paid for at a rate between 4 and 7 cents per pair. The majority of the women working on the 5-cent pants report that they finish a pair an hour. Occasionally they spend a few minutes more, while we noticed among the coat workers, a tendency to accomplish work paid at the same rate in a few minutes less. The 6 and 7-cent pants seem to take relatively a somewhat longer time, and I think that we should not be justified in estimating the average earnings of the pants finishers at more than 4 cents an hour of steady work. The most poorly paid woman that I found was an Englishwoman over sixty years old, who said that she could not make 3 cents an hour. She was undoubtedly a slow worker. I have found no other case comparable with hers. On the other hand, practically no one among the Italian home-finishers earns over 5 cents an hour at finishing pants.

Different rates of payment for the same work do not prevail to any extent either in different localities or among different women in the same locality. Competition seems to be sufficiently active effectually to prevent this. It may be possible to find individual cases where one woman is receiving only 5 cents for work for which another obtains 6 cents, but the piece rate is in general a pretty accurate guage of the amount of work required. An addition of a half-cent usually indicates a few more buttons to be sewed on, or some other additional task. Moreover the rates paid in the shops for finishing done there are, in general, about the same as those paid the women in their homes. A comparison of piece rates shows this, and the weekly wages are of course computed on practically the same basis.

If the weekly wages of the home-finishers were estimated on the basis of a ten-hour day at the rates given above, we should get a result of $3.00 a week for the average coat finisher and $2.40 or over for the pants finisher, with many among the pants finishers earning $3.00. That they do not ordinarily earn these sums is to be explained in but one way, that they do not on the average work ten hours a day. This I am convinced is true. But this does not mean that their lot is an easy one. The hours lost in waiting for work form a serious addition to those actually spent at work. As this time has no effect upon the output, no reward is received for it. From the point of view of the laborer it forms part of the sacrifice and must be counted in her working time, yet it forms no part of the labor time for which payment is actually received. Her working hours are increased also by her home duties. It is clear, then, that while the amount of wages that a woman receives weekly may be in absolute figures very small, its small-

ness does not necessarily indicate either that the rate of payment is low in proportion to the work accomplished, or on the other hand that the burden resting upon the woman is a light one.

What is the actual weekly income which the Italian finishers derive from their work? It is usually much less than the $2.40 or $3.00 that we have mentioned, just because the hours of work are generally less than ten per day. Many of the women, stating apologetically that they have little time for work, will tell you that they earn on the average $1.00 or $1.50 per week. A few claim an average of from $2.00 to $3.00, while one woman, the remarkable coat-finisher before referred to, receives occasionally as much as $4.50, and makes on the average $3.50 per week. These, however, are merely estimates. I have fortunately been able to copy the record-books of three women, in which had been entered by the contractor the number of garments taken out, the piece price to be paid, and usually the date of payment. Here we have trustworthy evidence. The following table shows the results obtained from the entries in these books. These women were all anxious to earn money, and worked as many hours as possible between seven in the morning and nine at night. The wages, therefore, represent about the maximum earned in the homes by women working long hours at about normal speed.

TABLE K.—Wages of Home-Finishers, Working on Pants.

Case 1.—Wages Paid Weekly.

1901.	
August	$2 87
August	2 09
September	1 55
September	43
September	2 50
September	2 65
October	3 32
October	2 25
October	3 19
October	3 22
Total for 10 weeks	$24 07
Average per week	2 40

Case 2.—Wages Paid Bi-Weekly.

1900.	
February	$5 02
February	5 98
March	6 98
March	4 35
April	6 56
April	3 45
May	4 92
May	5 61
June	7 60
July	5 15
August	4 75
September	3 80
September	3 60
October	6 19
November	4 88
December	7 27
December	5 27
1901.	
January	4 13
January	4 27
January	4 56
February	5 72
February	5 13
March	5 65
March	5 32
April	4 90
April	5 65
May	6 15
May	5 08
June	5 19
June	5 16
July	4 86
July	4 13
August	5 77
August	5 92
September	6 58
September	7 40
October	6 23
October	5 17
Total for 87 weeks	$204 35
Average per week	2 35

Case 3.—Wages paid Weekly.

1900.	
November	$2 87
November	1 54
November	2 71
December	2 40
December	2 43
December	3 20
December	3 35
1901.	
January	4 34
January	2 55
January	4 29
January	4 72
February	4 67
February	4 18
February	4 65
February	4 25
March	4 69
March	4 69
March	1 07
March	2 97
April	2 80
April	2 38
April	2 64
Total for 22 weeks	$73 39
Average per week	3 34

It is a question of great interest whether the Italian home finishers, ignorant of our language and customs, meet with difficulty in obtaining the wages they have earned. Is advantage frequently taken of their assumed helplessness? It must be admitted that I had expected frequent complaints on this score. Of sixty women carefully questioned fifty-five replied not only that their own wages had never been refused them, but that they had never known of any one who had had trouble in obtaining what she had earned. It is evident, therefore, that cases where women are cheated of their wages are not common. In the greatest centre for the finishing work, the Elizabeth and Mulberry Street section, the question itself excited astonishment. One woman, who had been in this country three months, stated that she had been at work for a month, and had received nothing up to that time, but had no reason to think she would have any trouble in obtaining what she had earned. More than half the women are in the habit of receiving their earnings weekly, while in the remaining cases payments every two weeks are customary. In two shops monthly payments are the rule; one woman said she received her money whenever she asked for it, which was sometimes daily.

Four women out of the sixty complained of attempts to cheat them. Trouble of this kind, therefore, while not frequent, is at least possible. The first of the four cases is in some respects the most distressing, as it is one of those petty oppressions for which the contractor escapes all punishment and which may continue indefinitely. The cheat consisted of what is commonly called "nibbling" at the woman's wages. On returning fifteen pairs of pants she was told that the three over the dozen should count as two. Sometimes the contractor has in this way

refused to count several pairs. There is no remedy except for the woman to seek work elsewhere. That such practices are not frequently resorted to is explained entirely by the fact that the women are in general ready to change from one shop to another. They live in the midst of people engaged in similar work in other shops, and so are able to make pretty accurate comparisons of the relative advantages. The woman whom I found submitting to this extortion was an Englishwoman. She dreaded to leave the contractor for whom she was working, as she knew no other place where she could obtain work.

One German woman told me that ten years ago she had done work for a "boss" who sometimes refused to pay wages; that his employees gradually left him, so that he was forced to go out of business; but that the women did not recover what was due them. She added that she thought such occurrences were less common now than formerly.

The remaining cases were those of two Italian women. The first is of interest as showing that not all of these people can be abused with impunity. The contractor owed the woman $30.00. He paid her $10.00, and offered to settle the balance of the account by giving her $13.00 more. She refused. He then offered her $15.00, which she also refused. He then told her that she should never get a cent from him. She reported the matter to her brother, who was a man of some experience, and he took the matter to court. She recovered the whole sum and the costs of the prosecution. This woman afterwards had trouble with another contractor, against whom she likewise obtained judgment.

The last case illustrates the worst state of affairs. The woman's story, for the exact truth of which there is

evidence, is as follows: The man from whom she takes work is in the habit of paying sometimes only part of the money due. Two months before he had kept back ten dollars of her wages. After that he paid her regularly until two weeks ago. He then held back two dollars. She did not leave him because she hoped to get what was due her. If she went elsewhere she would never obtain it. Courts are an unfamiliar source of terror to her. If the women ventured to make complaints, the contractor sometimes resorted to personal violence. In one case the contractor snatched away a woman's book, her only evidence of the work she had done, and tore it up. Sometimes he failed to enter in the books the full amount of work done. When one woman remonstrated about it, he knocked her down.

As in the last case, many of the women have no notion of any possible action on their part, if difficulties of this nature arise, except to leave the employer for another. By doing this they sacrifice whatever is due them at the time, even if they ensure the payment of their future wages. Knowledge of special organizations through which legal advice may be secured is, as I took pains to ascertain, usually entirely lacking among these women. In some cases, however, as in the one already cited, if trouble over wages actually arose, male relatives might be able to advise a proper course of action.

The branch of the Legal Aid Society that deals with women's cases has a class of clients very different from the Italian finishers. It almost never receives an appeal from them. Apparently they know nothing of it. Practically all the prosecutions of contractors that are brought by any philanthropic body for failure to pay wages to Italian finishers come through the Working Women's Protective Union. The serious magnitude of

the wrongs from which these women at times suffer is shown by the following cases taken from their books.

A Jewish contractor who was running a pants shop, employed four Italian women to do the finishing in their homes on Elizabeth Street. Suddenly he closed the shop and disappeared. The women appealed to the Working Women's Protective Union to help them secure the wages due them. The books in which the record of their work had been entered from day to day were the proof of their claims. This is a summary of the entries:

Case.	*Began work.*	*Finished work.*	*Time worked.*	*Number of pants finished.*	*Piece rate of payment.*	*Amount due.*
1st woman.	April 25, 1899.	April 12, 1900.	11 mos., 19 days.	2,579	7 cts.	$180.53
2d woman.	May 4, 1899.	April 12, 1900.	11 mos., 9 days.	2,307	7 cts.	161.49
3d woman.	Feb'y 19, 1900.	April 12, 1900.	1 mo., 25 days.	953	7 cts.	66.71
4th woman.	Jan'y 15, 1900.	April 12, 1900.	2 mos., 29 days.	562	7 cts.	39.34
Total.....			2 y., 3 m., 22 d.	6,401	.....	$448.07

It is surprising that work should have been continued so long a time without payment. Such, however, was the case. The contractor fled to Albany, but after four months ventured to return. He was promptly arrested and forced to settle the claims, so that after months of anxiety the women recovered their wages. Both the individual and the aggregate claims against this contractor were larger than in any other case of which I have learned. While such cases seldom occur, it is of the greatest importance that, when they do arise, they should be prosecuted vigorously. The influence of as conspicuous a case as this proved to be, in preventing similar abuses from taking place, is certainly noteworthy.

The wages earned by the home-finishers are only in rare instances the chief source of income of the family. A widow upon whom falls the entire burden of support-

ing herself and her children must find other work to do. Among our thirty-seven Italian women were found only three widows and one unmarried woman. In considering the matter of family income the last may be included with the married women, as her brother was the real head of the household. Of the three widows one was living in the home of her married daughter, and her wages, therefore, were but a supplementary part of the family income. There remain only two widows who regarded this work as the chief support of the family. Neither of them would find it possible to maintain herself and her children by it if she had no assistance. In the first case help is given by the twelve-year-old daughter, and the two together earn on the average $4.00 a week. As the rent is only $5.50 a month, the two, with a two-year-old baby, are able to live on the remainder. The second case is a repetition of the first, except that the daughter is older, and that the rent is less, since they live in Brooklyn.

Ninety-five per cent. of the home-finishers regard their wages as supplementary to those of other members of the family, and the amount of their wages is by no means indicative of the family prosperity. In fact, it may be said to be almost in inverse proportion to such prosperity, since the amount of work performed by the wives usually becomes less as the wages of the husbands increase. What in general is the employment of the men whose wives are finishers, and what are their wages? Almost none of them have steady employment. The largest number, 38 per cent. of the whole number, is found among the day laborers, engaged chiefly in shoveling dirt. If we add to these the fruit peddlers, the tailors (only two in number), and those engaged in the building-trades, chiefly as brick-carriers, we find that

over 75 per cent. of the men are engaged in work which is necessarily very irregular. The day laborers earn from $1.00 to $1.50 a day when employed, the maximum among the fruit peddlers is about the same, the tailors do not earn much more per day but probably have steadier employment, and the men in the building-trades receive from $1.50 a day up. On the whole, the wages of the men in these fa nilies rarely average more than $6.00 or $8.00 a week; they are sometimes as low as $3.00 a week. Moreover, there are considerable periods of time when they are earning practically nothing, and when the small contribution of the wife is of great assistance.

Besides the wages of husband and wife there are two other sources from which the family income may be increased; the wages of grown-up children, and the payment for sub-letting rooms. In the 34 households under consideration there were 14 sons and 4 daughters whose wages, ranging from $3.00 to $6.00 a week, were entirely under their parents' control. In 8 instances a part of the tenement was sub-let, in all cases but one to relatives, and a rental ranging from $2.00 to $4.50 a month was received. In more than 60 per cent. of the cases under consideration, therefore, there was an income in addition to the wages of husband and wife. In almost all cases where there are sons or daughters turning over their entire earnings to their parents, the presence of the children in the family means a net gain to it, since the additional expense incurred on their behalf does not equal the sum received, even when that is as low as $3.00 per week.

In conclusion, then, it may be said that when the husband and wife are the sole wage-earners, their joint weekly earnings average not more than $8.00 or $10.00 per week, and may readily fall below that amount; and

that this sum may be increased to the extent of about $1.00 a week by sub-letting one of the rooms, or by $3.00 to $6.00 a week through wages earned by some other member of the family. The lowest regular family income that I have found among the married Italian finishers is one of $5.00 per week. Of this more than $3.00 was contributed by the husband, and less than $2.00 by the wife. One of the most prosperous families consisted of a man who was unable to work on account of sickness, his wife who earned $2.00 a week, and three daughters, each of whom earned $6.00 a week in a shop. In another case the man ran a small grocery store, the profits of which could not be learned. One of the children, however, went to a parochial school at which there was a charge of ten cents a week. The mother's sewing did little more than pay for school books and other "extra" things which the child needed.

What relation does this income bear to the living expenses of the family? Are these great sections of the city where thousands of women are working in their homes dependent to a large extent on charitable aid, or are they in general self-supporting communities? I regret that I am unable to present detailed family budgets. I can give only such general facts as I have secured. Of the household expenses rent is the most tangible one, and the one which it is least easy to modify. Since over 78 per cent. of the families were found in two-room tenements, we will here consider only those of this size. The three-room and four-room tenements do not as a rule cost quite as much per room, as each such tenement usually contains only one outside room. The rent charged for a two-room tenement varies, first, according to the part of the city in which it is located; secondly, according to whether the tenement is in a building on

the street or in a rear building; thirdly, according to whether the tenement is in the front or back of the building in which it is located; fourthly, according to the floor on which it is situated. In the sections of New York previously indicated as the subject of this investigation among the home workers, the highest rents are found on Elizabeth Street, and the lowest in the two blocks in Brooklyn. The maximum rent for two rooms is $11.00 per month, the minimum $4.00. In Manhattan the lowest rent in the quarters visited is $5.00 per month for two rooms on the ground floor of a rear tenement, the rooms being in fact little more than lighted cellars. Rooms so placed do not vary much in price in the different blocks. The only way in which a family can pay less rent than this is by renting one-half of a tenement from some relative or friend. In the front buildings stores frequently occupy the first floors. The second-floor front rooms are regarded as the most desirable, and in the two blocks on Elizabeth Street rent for $11.00 a month. Here, as in general in other localities, rents regularly decrease fifty cents per month as you pass from front rooms to back or from the rooms on one floor to the corresponding rooms on the floor above. Thus the scale of rents for the front tenements is $11.00, $10.50, $10.00, and finally $9.50 for the fifth floor. The rooms in the back of the same building range from $10.50 on the second floor to $9.00 on the fifth. On Goerck Street the rents start at $7.50 and run down by the same intervals. The rooms are of practically the same character in the two districts.

In spite of the difference in the rents in different parts of the city, even parts equally easy of access for those engaged in the same class of work, the financial side of the matter seems to have little influence in determining the location of these Italians. The decisive factor in the

choice of any particular family is the location of other families from the same town in Italy. Whatever accident may be responsible for the location of a small group on a particular street in the beginning, the fact that it is there proves the strongest magnet to attract others who come from the same town. Occasionally movements to other parts of the city may occur because rents are lower; but change of residence for this reason does not occur with sufficient frequency to make it at all possible to regard the regions of high rent as coterminous with regions of prosperity. It might rather be said that where rents are highest most over-crowding takes place, by which the cost per person is made not far different from what it is in other sections. In a few cases difference in location means not only difference in birth-place, but also difference in temperament. Thus the Sicilians enjoy the noisy, bustling life of Elizabeth Street, while the Neapolitans look upon it with scorn and say that they want more quiet.

Another expense, variable but comparatively easy of measurement, is that for coal. This is usually bought by the pail, at a cost of five, seven or ten cents. In warm weather one pail a day, varying in size under different circumstances, is regarded by those who live well as quite sufficient for ordinary cooking. Some families do little or no cooking during the warm months. From fifteen to twenty cents' worth of coal is sufficient to keep a fire all day and all night in cold weather, and many families use less. In the coldest weather, therefore, if a family is to be comfortable, it must spend a dollar a week or more on coal. Buying coal in large quantities of course introduces a great saving in expense, but this is rarely done. One family, which seems more prosperous than the average and lives more comfortably, found last winter that

one wagon-load of coal, costing $5.75, lasted through November, December, January and February. Gas is sometimes used instead of coal for cooking purposes, but the cost is about the same. Twenty-five cents' worth lasts four or five days when not much work is to be done; at other times only two or three days.

It is not an easy matter to estimate the expense for food. Let us assume that two children equal one adult, and take as our typical family one equal to four adults. This would in reality be composed usually of three adults and two children or two adults and four children. Among these Italians a dollar a week apiece would be considered an ample, even a generous, allowance for such a family. Many of the families have meat only once a week. This family could, on this allowance, have it several times, and would be liberally provided with vegetables of various kinds. In two cases where women boarded with their sisters, I found them paying $1.00 a week for board, lodging being paid separately, and food better than the average was provided. This is also as large a sum as I have found used in the families commonly held to live well according to Italian standards. That many of the Italians spend less than this is doubtless true. The minimum that will support life has probably been reached by a family, consisting of one adult and five children, by which in general twelve cents a day is spent for food for all. This sum purchases three loaves of stale bread and three cents' worth of cheese. On rare occasions, this fare is supplemented by macaroni, lima beans or bananas. Fuel as well as food is saved by this ordinary form of daily meals. How long such a diet could be continued is doubtful. It seems a process of slow starvation, and is generally condemned by the surrounding Italian families.

On the basis of the preceding observations we should conclude that according to Italian standards $32.00 a month would, even in the coldest weather, provide comfortably, even liberally, for rent, fuel and food for a family of three adults and two children, or two adults and four children. Of this amount $10.00 would go for rent, $5.00 for fuel, and $17.00 for food. For these purposes a family income of less than $8.00 a week is all that is necessary. No allowance has been made for clothes. They undoubtedly cost something, but it would be difficult to say how much. Certainly the sum is not large. It is possible to reduce materially each one of the above items of expense. Rent may be reduced one-half, coal only for a short time amounts to so much and averages less than half that amount, and many Italian families keep well and strong on an expenditure of three-fourths the sum mentioned for food. This would reduce the cost of living to $5.00 a week, with a slight additional allowance for clothing.

The fact that family expenditures may be brought within the normal family income by no means proves that that will be done, especially when the income varies considerably from time to time. In the case of these Italians the effect of the fluctuations in the father's wage is somewhat counteracted by the fact that the family is not dependent exclusively upon one of its members. Still the general level of wages is so low, and variations occur so often, that we should not be surprised to hear of frequent appeals for charitable aid. Are the families to which these home finishers belong supported to any great extent by private charity?

The Charity Organization Society has in its possession a very elaborate set of maps showing, among other things, the distribution by blocks of all the charity cases

in Manhattan that have appeared on the records of the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the United Hebrew Charities, or the Charity Organization Society itself. I had purposed to present some of these facts by means of a map of the part of the city below 16th Street, that it might be possible to compare the amount of relief extended in the centers of home finishing with that given in other crowded districts. This map would have shown one thing clearly, that the old Italian quarter west of the Bowery stands in sharp contrast to the whole region east of the Bowery from Houston Street to the river. In the former section the highest number of applications for aid made from a single block was 180; in the latter they amounted in each of several blocks to over 700. In other respects, however, for the particular purpose in mind the map would have been misleading, and has therefore been omitted. Within the time covered by these records there has been much shifting of population. The result has been that certain blocks which are now almost exclusively Italian, and in which much finishing is done, would have appeared in the map with records determined by the Jewish or Irish predecessors of the present inhabitants.

For the purpose of determining exactly what the situation might be in regard to aid given to the families of home finishers, I resorted to the records of the Charity Organization Society. I brought together all the applications for aid received by this Society between January 1, 1890 and July 1, 1901, from the two blocks on Elizabeth Street and the block on Cherry Street which have previously been pointed out. Only the applications from the tenements on Elizabeth and Cherry Streets themselves were taken. As the two Elizabeth Street blocks are located side by side they may be considered together.

In a little over ten years they furnished the Society with 127 applications for aid. Home finishing, however, cannot have been as prevalent there in the past as it is to-day, for in only 14 cases were the women in the family engaged in this work. In order to discover what relation, if any, this work bears to family independence we will examine these cases more closely. Eleven of them, that is, nearly 77 per cent., had to do with matters of employment. In none of these cases was the lack of work, or the inability to get on longer without work, due to laziness or general inefficiency. There is no implication that the work of the wife had rendered the husband less ready and energetic in the attempt to obtain work. In three cases accidents, which resulted in temporarily crippling the men, were directly responsible for the situation. In one instance aid was not asked until the man had been disabled for three months. Aid was then asked for, but the wife took up pants finishing, and was able to support the family, with the help of what they already had, until the husband was able to work again. In the other accident cases only slight assistance was requested, as the families, by means of pants finishing, could almost support themselves until the husband should be able to work. In three of the remaining eight cases the husband, a day laborer, had been out of work for three months in the winter, when comparatively little work is to be had. The fact that the family had been able to manage for that length of time indicates that there was no undue readiness to seek for aid. In all these cases work was what was asked for and not alms. Until work could be secured, one family could support itself in all other respects if coal could be provided.

So far six of the eleven employment cases have been considered. All of them have had to do with the

inability of the husband to work. In the next three cases help is requested by widows. Two of them are in need because they cannot obtain licenses to work at home, and so cannot procure work. These difficulties are finally adjusted and they at once become independent. The third application was due to lack of work because of a strike, and with the end of the strike the woman disappears from among the charity cases. Two of the eleven cases remain. In one the man said emphatically that he wanted work, not alms. He was a mason and it was winter. He had saved over $1,000, but lost it through a bad investment. He finally secured a little work, and the family managed to get along with the wife's help. In the other case the husband had left the city to find work. Nothing had been heard of him for three months, and the wife applied to have one of the children put in an institution. The husband returned soon after, the child was at once taken home by the parents, and the case was closed.

This seems a remarkably favorable record for 78 per cent. of the cases received from families of home-finishers in a poor and densely crowded district. The number of applications received is indeed small, but this fact is itself significant. Aid seems to be sought only as a last resort, only a small amount is requested, work is in all cases preferred, and as soon as it is obtained no disposition to accept further assistance is manifested. The actual records are more convincing than these brief summaries can be.

There remain three cases out of the whole fourteen, which must be treated separately. One is that of a widow, whose husband had recently died, and who was unable to support herself and her child. She asked for transportation back to her family and friends in Italy.

The other two are cases where the men claimed to want work, but refused to take any at low wages. In one instance the man had had nervous prostration for a year and a half, and had become accustomed not to work. We have, then, only two cases, or 14 per cent. of the whole number, where the records show a spirit of dependence, and an absence of determined effort to make the best of the situation.

The block on Cherry Street presents very different, but no less significant records. In charity annals this block is a notorious one. In the Charity Organization map 570 cases are credited to it. There is but one block south of Division street and east of the New Bowery, that has a worse record. From the tenements of this block which face on Cherry street, I find that the Charity Organization Society has had 155 applications for relief since 1890. These tenements are now occupied almost entirely by Italians, and 208 families in the block have applied for licenses to do work on clothing in their homes. Have we found an Italian community where the scanty earnings of the home workers, and of their irregularly employed husbands, are to a large extent supplemented by private charity? This is by no means the case. Until two or three years ago the block was occupied chiefly by Irish people, together with a few English families. These people contributed 149 of the 155 applicants. From the Italians have come but six requests for aid. Living in the same neighborhood and in the same buildings, and handicapped by their lack of knowledge of English, the Italians have still been able to support themselves, where their predecessors passed the burden over to others. Of the six Italian cases, four came from families of pants finishers. In one case there was no destitution, but help was wanted to bury a child;

in the second case the husband, a day laborer, was out of work and the wife was sick; in the third case the husband had just died and the wife wanted help to return to Italy; and in the last case the husband was sick, but after the wife obtained work at finishing pants they got along without further help.

It may be suggested that these records are not indicative of the real situation, since it is possible that the Italians in these districts, when in need, do not apply to the Charity Organization Society or to affiliated societies, as the Irish and English do, but seek aid elsewhere. Aside from benevolent organizations connected with churches there are two societies that work exclusively among the Italians. These are the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants and the Italian Benevolent Society (*Società Italiana di Beneficenza*). The purposes of the former society are stated to be "to afford advice, information, aid and protection of all kinds to Italian immigrants, and generally to promote their welfare."[1] The giving of aid in the form of money, clothing or food is no part of the work of this organization, but falls to the lot of the second society. The last report of this society, the Italian Benevolent Society, issued soon after March 31, 1902, shows that the total expenses of the body for the preceding thirteen months amounted to only $4,114.84.[2] When we consider the large amounts spent for charitable purposes among other peoples, the Jews for example, this amount, as the total for the only distinctively Italian charitable society, which extends its work over the whole area of the city, seems insignificant indeed. In addition to this it is to be remembered that

[1] *Constitution of the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants*, art. i., sec. ii.

[2] *L'Amministrazione della Società Italiana di Beneficenza.* 5 Febbraio, 1901, al 31 Marzo, 1902.

the Italian Catholic churches give considerable aid. The amount of this cannot be definitely ascertained. In the case of one church the priest in charge says that it amounts to $100 a month. But there are no indications that the churches are more active in the Italian sections than in other parts of the city. The irresistible conclusion, then, seems to be that the Italian people manifest a noteworthy disposition to maintain themselves independently of outside assistance, a disposition which contrasts most favorably with that of people of other nationalities in the same economic class. It is a fact not without significance that in going about to quite an extent among the Italian homes, I have found not only that the children do not ask for money, but that it is frequently difficult to persuade them to accept it, even after they have rendered some considerable service.

If dependence upon outside assistance is not characteristic of the Italians, mutual helpfulness certainly is. The fact that they are not more often forced to ask for aid is to be explained in part by the existence among them of numerous mutual benevolent societies. The Corresponding Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants, Mr. Gino C. Speranza, who has had large experience with these organizations, estimates that there are between two and three thousand of them in New York City, ranging in size from twenty-five members to two thousand. Each society consists usually of immigrants coming from a single Italian town or from a small island. In general purposes, structure and function they are all much alike, and the following brief description of one of them may be regarded as typical.[1]

[1] These facts are taken from the Constitution of the Società di Mutuo-Soccorso Isola Salina.

The Isola Salina is a small island north of Sicily, the total population of which does not exceed a thousand. Yet the Società di Mutuo-Soccorso Isola Salina counts about a hundred men as members in New York. They are chiefly fruit-venders. Five or six of them originally drew up a charter about two years ago, and incorporated the society. Membership is limited to those born in the Island of Salina, or descended from parents born there, and living in New York or within 300 miles of it, and to children of parents from any of the Eolian Islands if they have lived ten years in the Island of Salina. The initiation fee varies according to age from $1.00 a year for a young man between 15 and 21, to $15.00 for a man between 46 and 50. Monthly dues for all members living in New York are $1.00, paid in advance, and a special assessment of $2.00 is levied upon all the survivors when a member dies. The benefits promised by the society include medical attendance for all the family, payments to members in case of sickness, a payment of $25.00 on the death of the wife of a member, $50.00 for the funeral of a member and the amount secured by the $2.00 assessment, in some cases a life pension, and the payment of passage to Italy when the lodge physician certifies that the state of the man's health makes a return desirable. In special cases further aid may be given at the discretion of the society.

Three facts are especially noticeable in connection with such a society as we have described: first, it is composed chiefly of people well known to each other; second, in addition to certain definite payments such as an insurance company might make, other benefits of a less strictly business nature are often extended, when the circumstances justify it; and, third, since both classes of payments are regarded as legitimate returns for money pre-

viously paid in, they have not, even in the case of the voluntary payments, the pauperizing effect of aid received from strictly charitable societies. Moreover, as the members are well known to each other, the decisions of the committees are usually just.

The readiness of the wife to bear part of the burden of family support, the close ties existing between relatives outside the immediate family, the low cost of living of the Italians, and the mutual helpfulness among them organized in benevolent societies, combine to bring about the result that these groups of Italians are, as a whole, not dependent to any extent upon the general charity of the community.

CHAPTER VII

THE FACTORY SYSTEM IN THE OVERALLS TRADE

HARDLY a greater contrast in work-places, in the method and organization of work, and in the general character of the employees, is to be found within a single industry than that between the home-finishing of coats and pants and the making of overalls. While it is true that excellent coats were made up in the old home shops, and still continue to be manufactured in small establishments, the work on overalls and on other workingmen's garments, when it was done in the home shops, was performed by an inferior class of workmen since it required less skill. The results were far from satisfactory. The possibilities of adapting such garments to the needs of particular classes of workmen, of making them strong and reliable, were not appreciated. The improvement in the class of goods manufactured has in this branch of the trade been chiefly connected with the development of the factory system. The manufacture of overalls and workingmen's garments is the branch of the clothing industry into which the factory system was first introduced, and in which it is now most largely employed. As early as 1871 there was in Wappinger's Falls, New York, the nucleus of the establishment that claims to have been the first overalls factory in the United States. By 1876 this factory had 250 employes, largely women, engaged in making overalls and workingmen's suits on machines run by steam power. There are at least three reasons for the

early use of machines run by mechanical power in this line of work. First, it is harder to drive a needle through the closely woven cotton fabrics of which these suits are made than through woolen goods. Second, the work is less complicated than that on regularly tailored suits, and it is consequently of advantage to be able to keep up a constant high rate of speed. Third, it is work that can well be done by women, but the use of foot-power machines would have made it, in some cases at least, more difficult to increase rapidly the number of operatives of the class desired.

During the year 1900 there were 2901 people in New York State engaged in making overalls and workingmen's suits.[1] These were found in 34 establishments. The average number of employes in a factory was therefore 80. This is in marked contrast to the situation that we have found in other branches of the ready-made clothing trade. If our official statistics on this subject are of any value they establish two facts: First, that the overalls industry is carried on chiefly under the factory system; second, that it flourishes in small cities. Among overalls manufacturers, however, there is an impression that large quantities of the cheaper grades of overalls are made in shops in New York city, in which the operatives are chiefly Jewish or Polish men. Neither the reports of the factory inspectors nor the opinions of labor leaders familiar with the situation in the clothing trade in the city justify this opinion. It is difficult to find a half dozen such shops, and while a small number certainly exist, I find no reason to think that they manufacture any appreciable percentage of the total output.

Because of the relatively unimportant position held by

[1] Compiled from the *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Factory Inspector of the State of New York*, 1900.

New York City in this branch of the clothing trade, I have extended my investigations to include Newburg, New York, a city frequently referred to as the centre of the overalls trade. Detailed observations have been made upon two establishments in that city and upon one in New York. These three firms employ more than 900 people in the plants under consideration. As we have been describing at length the general condition of the lowest classes of garment workers, it is but fitting that we take up now those establishments that offer the most desirable opportunities for work in the clothing trade.

These three establishments, and in fact overalls factories in general, are under the direct control of the manufacturer. The contractor does not appear, and no work is given out to be done in the homes. The factory serves all purposes. Here the garments are cut, and are made up on the machines driven by steam, gas, or electricity; buttonholes are made and buttons sewed on by machinery; and the completed goods are packed and shipped directly to the retail dealer. The output of these factories is large, and the variety of goods manufactured in them is noteworthy. There are overalls of all kinds, unlined duck coats, pants made of various kinds of cotton goods, and sometimes even woolen suits, which are of a substantial character, but lack the cut and finish that a tailor would give. Many factories, however, probably a majority of them, confine themselves to the manufacture of the various styles of cotton suits needed by men working at trades.

In such factories the division of labor between the sexes is almost everywhere the same. The cutting, whether done by machinery or by hand, is under the charge of men, and they alone are found also in the shipping department. With rare exceptions all the

work of making the garments is done by women. They form 83 per cent. of the total number of employes in the factories in this State engaged in making overalls and workingmen's clothing. The 17 per cent. made up of the men are found in the two departments before mentioned.

Except in the establishments where woolen suits as well as cotton are made up, nearly all the women, certainly more than 90 per cent. of them, are employed in stitching up the garments. The remainder put on buttons, bars or tags, or make button-holes by machine, or serve as examiners of the work. The woolen suits require some hand finishing. This work does not differ much from the finishing work previously considered. The method in which a pair of overalls, a duck coat or a pair of cotton pants is stitched up by machinery differs somewhat in different factories. It is common to find that the entire garment is sewed up by a single girl. In the case of overalls she may do all the stitching except on one seam, which is sewed on a double-needle machine. Sometimes, however, we find section work, but even this involves a very slight division of labor. For example, the work may be divided among three girls, each of whom has only a particular part to do. Usually a girl has to understand not only how to put together an entire garment of a certain kind, but even how to make up several kinds of garments. It is customary to divide the operators in a factory into coat operators, pants operators and overalls operators. This means, however, that each of the girls has her special kind of garment to make only when there is plenty of work of all kinds. A coat operator, for example, in default of her own kind of work, may be called upon to stitch pants or overalls. This happens more frequently in the case of coat or pants

operators than among the overalls workers, since the employment of the last is least influenced by seasonal fluctuations in demand.

Before taking up the more detailed questions of hours of labor, wages and the like, let us treat of the personnel of the workers. In contrast to the women whom we have previously studied these are practically all Americans by birth. This is true not only of those in New York State, but of the girls in this line of work in the West and South. In the Newburgh and New York factories under consideration the girls were almost all of Irish or American parentage. These nationalities prevail everywhere in the trade, but in some localities many of the girls are of German or Dutch descent.

It is contrary to the practice of these three factories to admit girls under 16 years of age. Of the 900 women employed only 3 were below that limit. On the other hand the work demands quickness of movement, and the superintendents state frankly that they have no use for a woman over 45. Probably none even of that age would be taken on, but individual instances may be found where women as old as 62 are still retained in the factory. A large majority of the employees are strong, healthy-looking women of between 20 and 30 years of age.

The girls entering the factory have in almost all cases graduated from the grammar schools, and some of them both speak and write with considerable force and ability. One of the women spoke regretfully of the fact that two able young girls, who had recently finished school and had just entered the factory, were growing careless in their way of speaking. But she added that she thought they would get over that when they had been there longer.

The somewhat varied nature of the work required,

especially the necessity of passing from one kind of work to another, demands some intelligence on the part of the worker. Quickness of movement is perhaps the primary requisite of a good machine operator in this line of work. But it is noticeable that the brightest girls, provided they take an interest in their work, not only learn it in the least time, but also become usually the most rapid workers. Ability to concentrate attention is absolutely essential. For this reason there is a class of girls that have been especially successful, the deaf-mutes. One of the three factories that we have mentioned has two deaf-mutes, and each of the others has one. All of the managers speak in the highest terms of their ability. In spite of the constant whir and buzz of machinery in the large rooms and the movement of passing people, nothing distracts their attention. One manager remarked that he would guarantee success to any overalls factory that should start work in a deaf-mute asylum, and added that those two girls now did the work formerly performed by three normal girls. In each of the other factories the deaf-mute was among the most highly paid women there. This is a line of work that might profitably be taken up by more of them, as there is room for as many as would enter it.

Few of the women are married, and none of those who marry do so with the expectation of remaining at their work. Misfortune, however, may send them back to it. There are several cases on record where former operators have returned to the factory after the death of their husbands, and have been able to bring up their children on their earnings. Opposite one of the large Newburgh factories is a Day Nursery, where children are cared for while their mothers are at work. The attendant in charge says that she has never had more than three chil-

dren whose mothers were working in the overalls factory, in spite of the fact that it employs between 500 and 600 women. Of this number about five per cent., according to the superintendent, leave every year to get married.

Such are some of the personal characteristics of the women employed in these factories. What shall be said of the places in which they work? The popular idea of a clothing factory has been formed largely from the distressing, and unfortunately true, descriptions that have from time to time appeared of the small, ill-ventilated and dirty clothing shops in the Jewish quarter of New York City. Yet the workingman who buys a pair of overalls for 75 cents, especially if it bears a Union label, may be reasonably sure that it was made up under sanitary conditions that could not easily be improved. The New York factory under consideration is not a large one, but it is well lighted, and the employees are provided with all conveniences. No employee has a word of private criticism to make in this respect. The Newburgh establishments are large, and are especially adapted to the work to be performed. In one the light comes entirely from overhead, in order that it may be less trying to the eyes. In both factories there is an evident and an intelligent effort made to provide everything that may be conducive to better work or to greater comfort on the part of the employees. The supply of operators is here scarcely equal to the demand for them, and this fact forms an additional incentive to consideration for their welfare.

In the Newburgh factories the regular ten-hour working day is observed. It extends from 7 a. m. to 6 p. m., with one hour intermission for dinner. The doors are closed at 7:05 a. m. and 1:05 p. m., and any employe not within the building at that time loses his half-day's work.

These hours of work are the ones generally observed in the overalls factories. The shortest regular working day of which I know is that of a large and prominent Western factory. Here a nine-hour day is observed, with a Saturday half-holiday throughout the year, and no work overtime is permitted. The provisions as to hours are somewhat more liberal in the New York factory than in those at Newburgh, because the employees are widely scattered, some living in New Jersey and others on Long Island, and hence would find it difficult to reach the shop as early as seven o'clock. The power is turned on about ten minutes before eight, but the doors are not closed, and girls are admitted at any time after that hour. One of the employees told me that she really couldn't say at what hour the power was turned on, as she had never arrived early enough to find out. She usually arrives at about half-past eight, but one winter, when there was sickness in her family, she rarely reached her work before ten-thirty. The power in this factory is turned off for a half hour at noon, and again at a quarter before six, when work for the day is over.

Employment is regular throughout the year in all these three factories, except during the ten days or two weeks when account of stock is taken. The legal holidays are of course observed. Occasionally there is not sufficient work to keep all classes of employees busy, but this is unusual. The operators have work practically all the time. It seems a surprising thing to find clothing establishments in which the women, instead of complaining of lack of work during part of the year, actually absent themselves from work at times because they wish to do other things. There are two reasons why employment is more regular in the manufacture of overalls and workingmen's garments than in other branches of the cloth-

ing trade. The primary reason is found in the fact that styles are less frequently changed, and that the demand, especially for certain classes of garments, is less rigidly determined by the season. Of course there are certain months when orders come in more frequently, as the spring months in the overalls trade, but it is possible to forecast the future demand to quite an extent, and working for stock commonly supplements the order work during the dull season. The second reason for steady employment, but one that would remain inoperative without the first, is found in the amount of capital invested in the plants. The capital must not be permitted to lie idle. The absence of girls from work, especially in the busy season, is regarded as a positive injury to the employer, since their machines stand idle. No definite regulations have been adopted, however, by the manager of any of these three factories to restrict this evil. The relations existing between the management and the employees are in general friendly, and when there is a special pressure of work a request is made that there be as few absences as possible. Such a request is usually heeded. Special admonitions may be resorted to in individual cases, but after all the chief security for regular attendance at work is found in the fact that absence entails loss of wages. With the great mass of the workers these motives are quite sufficient to ensure regularity. That no more stringent measures are adopted in the few cases in which these prove unavailing is to be explained, as one of the superintendents asserts, by the fact that the places of the girls could not well be filled. "Otherwise," he added, "we might attempt to regulate the matter, since at times we are certainly inconvenienced."

The following table shows the average wages earned during the year 1899 in the three factories under con-

sideration. From five to eight women, employed by a different firm in New York, appear in these tables, as they could not conveniently be separated from the others. Their wages, however, were near the average, and have practically no effect upon the results. All the machine operators are paid by the piece, and probably not more than 5 per cent. of all the women here represented worked by the week.

TABLE M.

WAGES PAID TO WOMEN EMPLOYED IN OVERALLS FACTORIES IN 1899.*

Location.	Number of Factories.	Period of Time.	Number of Women.	Average No. of Days Worked.	Average Wages Per Day Worked.	Average Wages for the Period.
Newburgh. . .	2	1st Quarter.	590	73.2	$1.09	$80.05
" . .	2	2d Quarter.	560	74.4	1.04	77.46
" . .	2	3d Quarter.	572	72.7	1.04	75.90
" .	2	4th Quarter.	591	72.9	1.22	89.13
"	2	Whole Year.	578	293.3	1.10	323.00
New York.	2	1st Quarter.	34	59.1	1.18	69.82
" . .	2	2d Quarter.	26	71.3	1.15	82.25
" .	2	3d Quarter.	25	64.3	.99	63.85
" . .	2	4th Quarter.	19	65.9	1.18	77.44
" .	2	Whole Year.	26	258.5	1.12	291.53

The records from which the preceding table has been prepared include not only the wages of the skilled oper-

[1] Compiled from the *Eighteenth* and the *Nineteenth Reports of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of New York.*

ators, but also those of girls who are just learning the trade. Sometimes as many as 30 or 40 of these girls are to be found in a factory at one time. None of the experienced operators earn less than $1.00 a day, and there are at least twenty who appear in the records as averaging over $1.50 per day worked throughout the year. These twenty earn regularly, therefore, from $9.00 to $10.00 a week. Probably no woman averages more than that in this line of work, though for a short time some of them may earn more.

How long does a girl need to learn machine operating on overalls? There have been several cases where girls were earning a dollar a day by the end of the second month. Some superintendents claim that any bright girl should be able to do that, but among the women themselves the impression prevails that it is no disgrace to spend three or even four months before attaining that degree of speed. From the beginning the women are paid at piece rates, and therefore begin to earn something at once. The work can be learned only in the factories, where a teacher is provided. One firm estimates that the actual cost of teaching each new worker is $25.00. This amount is apparently obtained by making allowance for the profit that would accrue to the establishment if the machine were run by an experienced hand.

We have considered the general character of the women in the overalls factories and their work and wages. What are their relations to the outside world? In Newburgh the greater part of the women belong to families that have resided in Newburgh for a number of years. Many of them were born there. There are, however, two other classes. The first, and smaller one, consists of girls who have come to Newburgh with their

parents, or more frequently with the mother alone, in order to enter the factories. The second class is composed of girls who have come to the city alone, and who board usually in some private family. Except in connection with the last class, which comprises not more than one-fourth of the girls, one is almost as strongly impressed with the essential economic unity of the family as was the case among the very different classes of women in New York. What is earned by these women is in general simply a part of the family income, and not in any sense a fund for separate maintenance. The character of the home, the amount spent on clothing, the social activities of the different women, are determined by the general economic status of the families rather than by the ability of the women themselves. But when we come to consider the extent to which the family status is here affected by the employment of the daughter, we meet with quite a different situation. The women are in many cases the chief support of the family. We find here to a certain extent a repetition of the experiences of some of the New England towns. The opportunities for men to obtain work have not increased as rapidly as those for women. The latter were never better than they are to-day. In the case of the former, however, it is not only true that the industries in Newburgh in which men are employed have not expanded, but in some instances works have actually been abandoned, as has happened to certain foundries and shops for the manufacture of steam engines. In some instances men who were old and could not readily find similar work elsewhere have undoubtedly been led to remain in Newburgh on account of the excellent factory positions held by their daughters. More frequently, perhaps, it is a widowed mother who remains with her

daughters, while her sons find work elsewhere. There are still, of course, many men industrially employed in the city, and in these cases the wages of the daughters or sisters form a less important part of the family income. While in few instances, perhaps, may the employment of the women of the household be regarded as directly a reason for less exertion on the part of the men, indirectly, by interposing an obstacle in the way of free movement elsewhere on the part of the family, it undoubtedly has had that effect.

There are no "factory boarding-houses" maintained in the city. The girls who are without families board in private homes. Seldom more than two or three board in one place. One result of this practice is that they blend quite readily with the people of the city, and do not form a distinct class by themselves. From three to four dollars a week is the usual charge for board and lodging.

The energy of the young women is by no means exhausted by their industrial activity. Opportunities for social intercourse come in connection with their church work and with their trade unions, as well as in the varied life of a small city. A number of the girls take music lessons, and find time and interest to practice with more or less regularity. During the winter of 1900 and 1901 forty of the girls were members of the Young Women's Christian Association, an organization that here does not draw strict denominational lines, and admits Catholics as well as Protestants. The general fee for membership is $1.00. There are for the members both free classes and pay classes. The factory girls are quite as ready to join the latter as the former. The gymnasium and the cooking classes have proved especially popular with them, though sometimes dressmaking is taken up.

Practically all of the women carry life insurance. In the case of those with no near relatives this usually amounts to about $200, which is regarded as enough for burial expenses and miscellaneous items. A larger proportion of them are insured for $500, and while I can present no definite records in support of the statement, on the strength of information from various reliable sources I feel justified in saying that there are probably as many as a hundred women in one factory, employing five or six hundred women, who are carrying insurance to the amount of $1,000, usually for the benefit of the mother.

Few of the women save money. Those who are independent of relatives pay three or four dollars a week for board, maintain their insurance, meet a few incidental expenses and spend the rest on clothes. A few belong to benefit societies, such as the Ladies' Branch of the Foresters, which insures its members a weekly payment of five dollars in case of sickness. A small number, however, have bank accounts. I am able to present no estimate of the number. One woman, who has been depositing money for several years, tells me that on one occasion she found five other factory girls making deposits at the same time with herself. In general, however, the women earn good wages, live fairly well, provide by insurance for the future of any one dependent on them, and spend their wages as they come.

No attempt will be made to consider in detail the condition of the small number of women working in the New York overalls factory. Their wages have already been given. They are girls of much the same general character and intelligence as those just described. With less than a half-dozen exceptions they live with their parents, who receive their entire wages. Their homes

are scattered from Morristown, New Jersey, to Long Island City, and their only connection is through their common employment.

Certain broad, general contrasts appear between the women working on coats, pants and vests in New York City and the women employed in the manufacture of overalls and workingmen's suits. The former class is composed chiefly of Italian immigrants, with an admixture of Jewish and German women; the latter is made up almost exclusively of American-born women of Irish, American, or sometimes German, parentage. The majority of the former class do not speak English; nearly all of the latter have received a grammar-school education. The former are chiefly married women, engaged in finishing garments by hand in their homes; the latter are single women, operating machines in factories. The wages of the former class are small and irregular; those of the latter are relatively high and stable. Although in both cases the wages ordinarily form a part of the family income, the share contributed by the Italians is supplementary, while the overalls workers are in many instances the main support of the family. A considerable number of this class of employees are independent, self-supporting women. These protect themselves by life insurance and occasionally by membership in benefit societies or by deposits in the bank.

CHAPTER VIII

LABOR LEGISLATION IN NEW YORK STATE

It is not necessary to speak of the various laws that have been passed in New York to secure to married women their right to property acquired by their labor, to protect them from being defrauded of their wages by unscrupulous employers, and to relieve them in certain cases from the burden of cost incident to the recovery of such wages by a suit at law. In all these respects the provisions of the New York laws are liberal. It is our purpose here to deal with measures directed more specifically toward the regulation of the conditions under which work is carried on in the factories and the tenements, provisions the enforcement of which is chiefly in the hands of the factory inspector and his deputies.

The first general factory law passed in the state of New York was that of 1886.[1] Frequent amendments were made to this law from year to year, until the series of complicated and contradictory measures became difficult to interpret. In 1897 a general revision of the statutes concerning labor was undertaken, and the result was the passage of the measure which, with the amendments since made to it, is now known as the Labor Law.[2] The part of this law with which we are here concerned provides for the regulation of labor in three dis-

[1] See *New York State Laws of 1886*, c. 409.

[2] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, as amended.

tinct classes of places, rooms in tenement houses, shops in rear buildings, and other factories. The contractors in the shops in rear buildings are required to obtain licenses to carry on work, as are the tenement workers. These shops, however, are factories in the eyes of the law, and as soon as they have obtained their licenses are subject to the same restrictions as other factories. We may, therefore, group these two classes together, and consider simply the general contrast between the provisions regulating labor in factories and those applying to labor in tenement houses. Let us take up first the factory regulations.

Aside from the employes in certain specified kinds of work, the present labor law recognizes four classes of people to whom special protection is extended; children under fourteen, children between fourteen and sixteen, minors under eighteen, and adult women. With regard to members of the first-class, employment in factories is entirely forbidden.[1] This provision does not interfere with the employment of children by their parents in their own homes. As we have already pointed out, such employment does not occur frequently in the manufacture of men's ready-made clothing. Children between fourteen and sixteen may be employed in manufacturing establishments, provided a certificate is obtained from the health officer, stating that he is satisfied that the child is fourteen years of age or over, that he is physically able to perform the work intended, and that he has met certain requirements as to school attendance. In addition to this the child must be able to read and write simple sentences in the English language.[2] All minors

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 70.

[2] *Ibid.*, c. 415, §§ 70–73.

under eighteen, and all women, are prohibited employment in factories before six o'clock in the morning or after nine o'clock in the evening of any day, or for more than ten hours in any one day, or sixty hours in any one week, except to make a shorter work-day on the last day of the week; or more hours in any one week than will make an average of ten hours a day for the whole number of days so worked.[1] The hours of work required must be kept posted. These are the chief special restrictions that have to be taken into account in considering different age groups in the clothing trade. Other provisions, such as those applying to the cleaning of machinery and the like, of course do not affect the employees in this industry.

Besides the provisions applying to special groups of employes classified according to sex and age, there are several general regulations that extend protection to all the workers in this industry as in many other trades. These deal chiefly with matters of safety or of sanitation. Under the first head come measures concerning the enclosure and operation of elevators, the screening of stairs, the opening of doors, and the maintenance or erection of fire escapes. Under the second head are provisions relating to the lime-washing and painting of walls and ceilings, the limitation of the number of employes according to the size of the room, the maintenance of wash-rooms and water-closets, and of efficient means of ventilation.

Of the enforcement of these regulations it is not necessary to speak in detail. With the exception of the provision limiting the hours of employment of adult women they are neither new nor unusual. The extreme

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 77, as amended by *Laws of 1899*, c. 192.

difficulty of enforcing the observance of this regulation in the smaller shops has already been alluded to, as well as the greater readiness of such establishments to evade the law in other respects. Only a rigid and persistent system of inspection can prevent this.

We will pass now to the second group of regulations, those for the purpose of controlling the tenement house manufacture. The laws adopted on this subject apply chiefly to the making of men's and women's clothing of various kinds, of artificial flowers and feathers, and of cigars and cigarettes—in fact to all industries carried on to any extent in the home except the making of collars, cuffs, shirts or shirt-waists of cotton or linen goods that are laundried before being offered for sale.[1]

Previous to the first of September, 1899, the use of a room or apartment in any tenement or dwelling house for the manufacture of the class of articles first mentioned was forbidden to all persons except members of the family dwelling therein.[2] It was the duty of the factory inspector to prevent the existence of any tenement house shops, that is, places where one or more persons worked under the direction of another. But it was not the duty or even the right of the factory inspector to enter homes where only the members of the family were at work. Externally there is nothing to indicate a difference between a tenement in which three or four members of a family are working and one in which two or three neighbors are also employed. The tenements might be of the same size, machines might be heard running, and bundles of clothing might be seen going in and out. It is evident

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 100, as amended by *Laws of 1899*, c. 191.

[2] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 100.

that only by an extremely close and persistent system of inspection could these shops be ferreted out, and when once they had been discovered it was very easy for the contractor and his family to move elsewhere. Moreover, since the larger contractors were in general at liberty to give out work to be done in the homes, and since no record was kept at the factory office of work so given out, there was comparatively little danger in giving work to those special homes which were in reality shops. Without bringing any charges of neglect of duty against the factory inspectors, and admitting that illegal shops were in some cases suppressed, we find that others continued to exist, and in sufficient numbers to be easily found by any one visiting tenements at random in certain districts.

On the first of September, 1899, a new system of regulation, which is still in force, went into effect. According to the new provisions no distinction is made by statute between rooms in tenements or dwelling houses in which only members of the family are engaged in manufacture and those in which outsiders are employed. The law provides that no room in a tenement or dwelling house shall be used for manufacturing certain specified articles unless a license has been secured from the factory inspector.[1] No place in which clothing and certain other kinds of goods are made up is now beyond the jurisdiction of the factory inspector. To secure a license application must be made by some member of the family desiring to carry on work in the rooms in question. An inspection of the rooms is then made. "If the factory inspector ascertain that such room, apartment or building is in a clean and proper sanitary condition, and that

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 100, as amended by *Laws of 1899*, c. 191.

the articles specified in this section may be manufactured therein under clean and healthful conditions, he shall grant a license permitting the use of such room, apartment or building for the purpose of manufacturing, altering, repairing or finishing such articles."[1] Such a license is subject to revocation "if the health of the community or of the employes requires it, or if it appears that the rooms or apartments . . are not in a healthy or proper sanitary condition."[2]

The broad scope of the law and the large discretionary powers lodged in the hands of the factory inspector are apparent. Not only are homes as well as factories brought within his jurisdiction, but it is left largely to him to determine the standard to which the homes must conform. What constitutes a "clean and proper sanitary condition?" A rigid interpretation of this phrase might be sufficient to justify the complete abolition of tenement-house work; a loose interpretation might leave former conditions undisturbed. What has been the course actually adopted by the factory inspector?

Between September 1, 1899, when the law went into effect, and November 30, 1900, there were received at the factory office in New York City and investigated by the inspectors 25,731 applications for licenses.[3] This number included applications from rear buildings as well as from tenement houses. We have already spoken of the extremely large percentage of them that come from workers on men's clothing. It will be remembered that during a period of time, including that mentioned here

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 100, as amended by *Laws of 1899*, c. 191.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Compiled from the *Fourteenth* and the *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Factory Inspector of the State of New York*, 1899 and 1900.

and five additional months, the applications for licenses to work on men's clothing in New York City numbered 16,741. In the records of the office these are not separated from other applications, and in discussing the proportion of applications granted no attempt will be made to distinguish this branch of trade from others. Of the total number of applications for licenses 16,059, or 62.41 per cent. were granted, and 9,279, or 36.06 per cent. denied, or granted and later revoked. Assuming for the moment that these figures represent the real condition, and that the orders of the office were obeyed, we should find that the passage of this license law had had the effect of reducing by more than a fourth the number of places in tenements or rear buildings where manufacturing was carried on, and it would be but fair to assume that these places were at least among the worst.

To form an accurate idea of the situation, however, two additional facts must be taken into consideration. First, it does not take many months for the general standards of the factory inspector to become known, and in at least a few cases the utter hopelessness of securing a license would be apparent to the person desiring it. Consequently, no application would be made. Either of two courses of action might be followed; work would be given up, or it would be followed with the hope of escaping the attention of the inspector. Which course would be chosen would depend largely upon the activity of the inspector. There is one class of places to which this analysis particularly applies, a class formerly specifically prohibited by law, now not mentioned in the statute, but much more effectually controlled by the factory inspector. This is the class of tenement shops, that is, places in which people are employed in manufacturing goods who are not members of the family liv-

ing in the rooms. The factory inspector has adopted the policy of permitting the employment of a limited number of outsiders in properly kept homes where custom clothing is made up, but he has decreed that ready-made clothing cannot be manufactured "under clean and healthful conditions" where persons not members of the family are employed in the home. This distinction seems on the face of it a somewhat arbitrary one. In practice, however, a decided difference is observable between the two classes of places, and whatever opinion may be reached concerning the privilege extended to the custom clothier, there is no question that the ruling in the other case is a wise one. Shops in tenement houses for the manufacture of men's ready-made clothing, therefore, are now prohibited by the ruling of the factory inspector, since he refuses to grant licenses for them. Moreover, as all tenement houses in which clothing is manufactured are now subject to inspection, there is less chance for them to escape observation than formerly. The result is that they have to a large extent disappeared. This conclusion is based in part on my own experience in looking for such places before and since the law went into effect, and in part on the experience of others familiar with the localities in which they were formerly found. In some cases, certainly, shops that have never applied for licenses have been forced out of existence, and they must therefore be considered in estimating the full effect of the law.

The second fact to be observed is this: The number of unsuccessful applications for licenses is not really a fair index of the reduction in the number of places in which work is carried on, first, because manufacturing is sometimes continued after it has been forbidden, and secondly, because the rejected applicant frequently moves to other

quarters for which a license can be secured. In the latter case no reduction in the number of workers would occur, but presumably an improvement in the working place. We will consider the question of the amount of work performed in unlicensed places when we take up the discussion of the measures adopted for the enforcement of the law.

What is the general standard of health and cleanliness maintained by the factory inspector, below which more than one-third of the homes fall? It would hardly be fair to assume that it is that previously maintained in the homes to which licenses have been granted (which constituted nearly two-thirds of the number from which applications were received), since in many cases licenses were granted only after several changes had been made to meet the demands of the inspector. If a general statement were to be made, it should be that the present requirements of the factory inspector are somewhat higher than the conditions previously maintained by the better two-thirds of these places. Since the practical enforcement of the law, however, is in the hands of a number of deputies, it follows naturally that the conditions under which licenses are given are by no means uniform. It takes few visits among the workers themselves to reveal the fact that they are keenly alive to the differences in personal ideas of "cleanliness," and the desire is repeatedly expressed that Inspector A and not Inspector B may be sent. Uniformity in standards is hard to secure.

There are, however, a few general principles that are usually followed. It is not customary to grant licenses to a family living in one room, on the ground that under such circumstances it is entirely impossible to maintain proper conditions. Similarly the requirement is made

that the living-room, in which the work on clothing is performed, shall not obviously be used for sleeping purposes. I found two licensed homes, however, in each of which there was a bed in the living-room, and four with cots. Whether these had been in place when the license was granted or had been put up later I am unable to say. Homes may frequently be found in which the bed in the living-room has been taken down to comply with the orders of the inspector, but is put up again nightly to meet the convenience of the family. These two demands, that more than one room be occupied and that there be no bed in the living-room, seem to be most rigidly enforced, and to have impressed themselves most strongly upon the workers. The degree of cleanliness required cannot be accurately gauged, and is in any case a variable matter. For the rooms may be kept in fair order at first, while the special attention of the inspector is directed towards them, but inspections cannot be made often enough to secure the maintenance of such conditions later on. Occasionally changes that are ordered in the interests of cleanliness devolve upon the landlord, such as the repairing of stairs or the whitewashing of walls. Sometimes these changes are made, and when they are not the tenant occasionally moves. In some cases a license is refused on the ground that there are too many children in the rooms. To one familiar with these homes this seems one of the most reasonable objections. Occasionally the refusal is due to the fact that the rooms are damp, dirty, unhealthy, as in the case of those on the ground floor of rear tenements. Sometimes it is not easy to discover any difference between a home to which a license has been refused and one to which it has been granted, though in the mass the licensed places are superior to those refused licenses.

It has already been pointed out that a uniformly high standard of what constitutes a "clean and healthful condition" might, if rigidly enforced, practically drive manufacturing out of the tenements. That this would be from all points of view desirable I am not prepared to maintain. What we have to consider at this point is the extent to which the license provisions of the law, as at present administered, may be said to guarantee to the consumer that the goods purchased by him are free from disease germs, vermin, and general filth. The danger from disease carried by clothing made in tenements is somewhat less than it formerly was. The Board of Health daily furnishes the factory inspector with a list of the places in which cases of contagious diseases have been found or reported. If any of these places are on the records of the factory office, an inspector at once visits the home and withdraws the license. The contractor is notified to give no more work to persons living there. Any goods that are found in the process of manufacture pass into the hands of the Board of Health to be disinfected or destroyed. When, therefore, cases of contagious disease are reported to the Board of Health promptly, the precautions taken should be effective. But no one imagines that cases are invariably so reported. Ignorance of the nature of the disease, poverty, fear of loss of work, all combine to promote the concealment of cases of sickness; and while it is extremely difficult to trace definite cases where disease has been carried by clothing made in tenements, there is no question that it is possible for this to occur under the present system of manufacture. How frequently this happens there is no way of ascertaining. With regard to clothing made under generally unsanitary conditions and abounding in vermin, testimony is unfortunately far more conclusive.

If it were not for the rigid inspection made by the clothing examiners who are hired by the contractors and manufacturers, there would be many complaints on this ground. All is done that can be done by the employers to put the clothing in proper condition, but the necessity of such close inspection is not a pleasant thing to consider, nor can we be sure that it is always efficacious.

None of the conditions described in the preceding paragraph are to be attributed specifically to the manufacture of clothing in an occasional unlicensed place. They accompany almost as readily the manufacture of clothing in a licensed place. A license is no protection against the appearance of disease among the children of the family, nor is it reason for the prompt summoning of a physician. A family living in one room may be of necessity somewhat more cramped, and somewhat less cleanly conditions may prevail, than where more space is occupied, but a knowledge of the general character of these overcrowded quarters would make it evident to any one that no system of inspection could insure to garments made in them freedom from uncleanliness and vermin.

It is easily possible in considering these phases of the subject to regard them by themselves, and to fail to give due consideration to other matters. These homes are not isolated from the community. Girls from them are at work in the shops, children are in the schools, physicians, nurses and charity workers visit them. Nevertheless the fact remains that the standards of cleanliness common to these quarters are not such as would willingly be tolerated by a large percentage of the buyers of the clothing made in them.

We have pointed out the general character of the places to which the license provisions apply, and de-

scribed the manner in which the law has been interpreted. It is necessary to consider next the methods by which it is enforced. After the passage of the law requests were sent from the factory office to manufacturers, asking for lists of their contractors and home workers. Lists of home workers were then requested from the contractors. In this way the names and addresses of large numbers of home workers were secured. They proved less valuable than had been expected, and little reliance is now placed upon this method of reaching the home workers. The present way is to force the home worker to apply for a license through the order of the contractor for whom she works. The law prohibits any person from hiring another to perform work of the character previously noted, in a tenement or dwelling house, unless the person so hired holds a license.[1] On articles manufactured contrary to law the factory inspector is directed to place a label bearing the words "tenement-made." No goods so labeled can be sold, nor can the tag be removed except by a factory inspector.[2] In practice this is the course of action: An inspector finds clothing being finished in an unlicensed room. He places a "tenement-made" label upon the clothing, and directs the worker to notify the contractor owning the goods to apply at the factory office for the removal of the tag. The inspector also gives the office information of his action. Usually the contractor and workman appear together. The contractor in applying for the removal of the tag signs a statement to the effect that the goods are his, and were being made up in an unlicensed place.

[1] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 100, as amended by *Laws of 1899*.

[2] *New York State Laws of 1897*, c. 415, § 102, as amended by *Laws of 1899*, c. 191.

If this is his first offence, or if the worker has not been refused a license, the tag is removed, and sometimes a simple warning is given. More leniency was shown for the first few months after the law went into effect than is manifested now, since knowledge of its demands has become more general.

The contractor may be one who according to the records of the factory office has previously given out work to unlicensed places, or this may be a home to which a license has been refused, while the contractor was especially notified of the fact. In such a case the prosecution of the contractor would probably be undertaken. Strong evidence against the contractor is found in the statement signed for the release of his goods, and conviction frequently follows. The following table shows for the year from November 30, 1899, to November 30, 1900, the course of the prosecutions entered upon by the factory inspector in the enforcement of the license law in the State of New York. It is needless to say that almost all of these cases were in New York City.

TABLE N.

PROSECUTIONS.[1]

Nature of Offense.	Total Number of Cases.	Number Convicted and Fined.	Convicted and Sentence Suspended.	Acquitted or Discharged.	Cases Pending.	Cases Withdrawn.	Amount of Fines.
Material found in unlicensed premises.....	164	92	35	25	6	6	$1933
Allowing unlawful use of premises	3	1	1	1	.....	.....	20
Removing tag applied on tenement work....	4	2	1	1	.....	.....	45
Employing persons not members of family ...	1	1	.....	.....	.....	.....	20
Total	172	96	37	27	6	6	$2018

The result of prosecutions and convictions such as those noted above is to make contractors unwilling to give out work except to persons holding licenses. Many contractors entirely refuse to do so. In this way pressure is put upon the workers to secure a license if possible. In some cases, and I have known of several, they find that they can get no work without it. Technically the person working in one of these homes without a license is liable to the same penalty as the contractor, but it has been the policy of the department to bring action against the latter rather than the former. The landlords also may be held responsible, but in only three cases were actions brought against them.

Work is still carried on to a certain extent in un-

[1] *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Factory Inspector of the State of New York*, 1900, p. 53.

licensed places, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to evade the law, now that it has been in force long enough for the initial difficulties to be overcome. There is one peculiar fact to be noted. It is easier for an unlicensed worker to obtain work from a custom clothier than from a contractor of ready-made goods. We find sometimes that a woman whose home is in such a wretched state that a license has been refused her has given up work on cheap ready-made clothing and may be found busily engaged on fine clothing made to order.

No marked changes in the law are at present contemplated or desired by any large group of people. It is generally admitted that the New York law is a broad and an efficient one, equal, if not superior, to any other in force in this country. It was originally modeled upon the Massachusetts law, but differs from it in several respects. Some minor regulations may be modified with a view to greater ease of administration, but the general provisions will undoubtedly remain fixed for some time. Any change in public policy, if such change should occur, would manifest itself rather in an alteration in the interpretation of the existing law than in the enactment of a new one.

CHAPTER IX

TRADE UNIONS

To the clothing cutters, who, as the most highly skilled and highly paid workers in the ready-made clothing industry, form a sort of trade aristocracy, is to be traced the first movement toward the formation of labor unions in this trade.[1] They formed a small organization in New York City as early as 1855, and from that time to the present they have been the heart and soul of the union movement among the garment workers. The progress, however, has been by no means constant, but has taken place through the efforts of a series of dissolving unions, each of which has perhaps gained something from the experience of its predecessors. In 1870 the "Sons of Adam," a new form of cutters' society, was organized in Philadelphia. It was extended to several other cities, flourished for about four years, and passed out of existence. As the Knights of Labor grew strong during the eighties, it drew to itself numerous independent unions, and established local assemblies here and there. Some of these assemblies issued a call for a National Convention of Clothing Cutters to meet at Cincinnati in December, 1886. From the second national union, established at that time, there evolved two years later National Trade Assembly 231 of the Knights of Labor—Clothing Cutters, Trimmers and

[1] See S. H. Jacobson, *Important Events in the Career of Clothing Cutters' Unions*, *The Garment Worker*, Vol. V, No. 4, pp. 18–20.

Tailors of North America. Even before the complete organization of this national assembly, however, dissensions arose in the body, and small groups of dissatisfied members withdrew to form independent unions. The fate of several of these is picturesquely pointed out by a loyal brother who says that "being born in envy and founded on malice, they soon came to an end in nothingness, and drifted into sweet oblivion."

It was constantly becoming clearer that the power of the Knights was waning. The assembly had had a rapid growth, but at no time had its organization been a compact and efficient one, nor did it enlist the active co-operation of its members. Meantime the independent unions were increasing in numbers through the accession of disaffected Knights. In 1891 these unions held a convention in New York, at which forty-seven delegates represented the Cutters' and Tailors' Unions of New York, Philadelphia and Boston. At this meeting a new national body was formed, which adopted the name The United Garment Workers of America, and voted to ally itself with the American Federation of Labor. This revolt against the Knights was in essence a protest against the alleged corruption and mismanagement of the officials of that body. For several years the Knights continued to exist and to hold annual conventions, but their actual membership was much less than their claims indicated. They received their death blow at the close of 1893, when the members of the local assemblies in New York and Brooklyn decided to go over to the new body.

Although it was to National Trade Assembly 231, Knights of Labor, that the majority of organized workmen in the garment trade for some years belonged, I shall give it no detailed study, partly because it has since been entirely superseded by the United Garment Work-

ers of America, but chiefly for the reason that at no time was there a sufficient number of women in its ranks to make its investigation of value for our purposes. The nucleus of the organization was formed by the cutters, among whom there are no women workers. Around these were ranged the tailors, in whose ranks are some women, while no attempt was made to include the overalls workers, who are chiefly women, and among whom women's unions have since proved most successful. We find but three women's assemblies registered as belonging to National Trade Assembly 231. At the fourth convention of the body only two women were present, and at the fifth but five.

The United Garment Workers of America is an international union which now includes in its membership almost all the organized men and women in the United States engaged in the manufacture of men's ready-made clothing, together with a number in Canada. It is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It has never been incorporated, as its present organization leaves it freer in case of financial or legal difficulties, but some of the local unions of which it is composed are corporations. In its establishment, as we have seen, the women workers bore no part either directly or indirectly, and the first officers chosen were all men.[1] Before the second convention, which was called late in 1891, twenty-four charters had been granted. Of these three were taken out by women's unions. One of these unions never paid any dues and was shortly dropped from the records; another led a precarious and nervous existence for some years, and at last went to pieces; the third,

[1] For the history of the national body reference should be made to the files of its official publication, *The Garment Worker*.

formed through the influence of the employer, who desired the label, has persisted to the present time.

In April, 1902, the United Garment Workers was composed of 179 local bodies, of which 83 admitted men only, while 96 were made up either exclusively of women, or of both men and women. In the unions of the last kind the women were usually in a large majority. The total membership was about 25,000, of which number approximately 8,000 were women. It has been the general policy of the United Garment Workers to organize men and women in separate unions. The existence of "mixed" bodies has come about in many cases through the creation of unions among the employes of single factories. In the overalls trade, for example, the mass of the employes are women operators, but a half-dozen or more men are usually employed in each factory as cutters. The unions in these factories would naturally include the men, and it is in this way that the mixed unions have frequently arisen. In this respect the garment workers differ from the cigar and cigarette makers, among whom the women are usually admitted to the men's unions. These two industries, cigar making and the manufacture of clothing, are practically the only ones in this country in which women have been organized in large numbers. The United Garment Workers claim both a larger number and a greater proportion of women than are to be found in any other national union.

Let us now consider the influence that the women have had upon the development of the national body, its policy towards them, and their share in its benefits. The United Garment Workers have held ten general conventions, two of which occurred during the first year, 1891. The others have met annually since that time, except in 1893 and 1896, in which years it was voted to

hold no convention owing to trade depression. No woman was present at either the first or the second convention, though at the second a mixed union sent one man as representative. For the third convention I have obtained no record. Since that time, however, women delegates have been present at all conventions. Their number has increased from 2 out of 53 delegates in 1894 to 18 out of 56 in 1900, and 23 out of 88 in 1901. This indicates a considerable degree of interest on the part of the women's unions, as all delegates are sent at the expense of the local body. There is still a slight tendency on the part of unions containing members of both sexes to send a disproportionately large number of men as delegates. There is not one of these unions, however, with the exception of a few that have sprung up in the last year or two, that has sent men only as delegates.

Until 1897 women delegates served only in a general way; they were elected to no temporary offices in the gift of the convention, nor were they chosen as permanent officials of the union. The officers of the international union now consist of a President, General Secretary, General Treasurer, General Auditor, three Trustees, and four others. The whole number forms the General Executive Board, which has supervision of the affairs of the entire union. In 1897 a vacancy occurred on this board, and the other members chose a woman, Miss Evelyn McGuire, of Newburgh, to serve the remaining three months of the term. At the expiration of this time Miss McGuire was re-elected by the convention itself. In 1898 she was succeeded by Miss Doody, of Detroit, who served for three years, and during her last term was joined by Miss Groshaus, of Streator, Illinois. These women made efficient officers, and it seemed probable that the precedent thus estab-

lished of choosing at least one member of the General Executive Board from among the women delegates would continue to be followed. In 1901, however, all the members elected were men.

In the appointment of committees it is evident that from the first convention at which women were present there has been a sedulous attempt to give them due recognition, as the correspondence between such appointments and the number of women delegates has been too close to be accidental.

Up to this point our review has concerned itself with the formal relations existing between the United Garment Workers and the women members. We have indicated the opportunities extended to the women and their nominal share in the responsibilities of the organization. In order to understand how far and in what ways they have actually molded the nature of the body of which they form so large a part, it is evident that we must pierce deeper than a consideration only of the number of women delegates present at its meetings or their official status.

Let us begin with a brief analysis of the history of the United Garment Workers and of the fundamental changes in its policy. Its earliest days had been spent in struggles against employers and against rival Knights, and in both of these contests it had come off victorious. In 1895 came the second great strike in New York, and although the men nominally gained material concessions, time proved them valueless. It was not so much winning a strike that proved difficult for the tailors as holding on to the results of victory. The following year came decisive defeats in large strikes in Chicago, Baltimore and Cincinnati. All these strikes had been entered into by the local unions without the consent of the General

Executive Board. Since that time it has been the policy of the organization to discourage all hasty strikes, and to resort to weapons of industrial warfare only in the last extremity. With this end in view, the powers of the General Executive Board to prevent strikes have been increased. A local union wishing to order a strike is subject first to the restraint of the other local garment unions in the same district, organized as a District Council; and then, even if the consent of this council has been given, to the control of the General Executive Board, which retains the right of final veto upon all proposed strikes, if they either involve more than twenty-five persons or are against a firm recognizing the union.[1] The initiative in regard to a strike rests entirely with the local union except in one case. When a strike has been authorized in one branch of the trade, "the G. E. B. [General Executive Board] shall be authorized, if in its judgment it is deemed essential to the success of said strike, to order all branches in the same city or section to join in said strike."[2] This is a recent provision, and one which, it is safe to say, will rarely be put in force.

While the leaders of the union were beginning to question the efficacy of the strike as a universal panacea for the ills of the clothing trade, the increase in the demand for the union label, which prior to 1896 had been in an experimental stage, turned their hopes in another direction. The union has found in the label a powerful lever. It is to-day the most important factor in determining the policy of the United Garment Workers, and as it is largely owing to the label that so many women's unions have been established in this country,

[1] *Constitution of the United Garment Workers of America*, 1901, Art. X, Sec. 5.

[2] *Ibid.*, Art. X, Sec. 15.

we may consider somewhat fully the conditions which limit its use.

The labels of the United Garment Workers are sold to any manufacturer of ready-made clothing who is willing to enter into an agreement to employ in the manufacture of garments only members of the union, to maintain proper sanitary conditions in his shop, to comply with the requirements of the state laws relating to workshops, to regulate hours and wages in accordance with the union standards that are maintained in the locality, or that may be agreed upon with the employes, and to refer to the general officers of the United Garment Workers for mediation all difficulties arising between employer and employes which they themselves are unable to settle. In the overalls trade no labels are granted except to manufacturers who have all the work done upon their own premises without the intervention of a contractor. All garments must bear the label. For this branch of the clothing trade a general minimum price list for the whole country has been drawn up, but there are numerous complaints that the rate is not uniformly enforced. There is one other point of importance to be noticed. Within the last year the Garment Workers have issued a declaration of war upon the contract system. It is recognized that it will be extremely difficult to restrict the label to employers who give out no work to be done off the premises, but it is the aim of the union to crush out the contract system so far as possible. As a first step the requirement that all goods shall be made up in the factory or shop of the manufacturer has been made a further condition of granting the label to applicants in New York City. Manufacturers already possessing the right to use the label are given six months time in which to comply with the new provisions. The gradual

extension of this new condition to all other cities is contemplated, and those will be taken up first in which the worst abuses are found.

It is evident that, if the requirements were strictly and fairly enforced by the union, the label would guarantee to the purchaser of clothing to which it was attached that the goods were manufactured by fairly-paid laborers under sanitary conditions. It is the aim and desire of the union that the label shall stand also for good quality and good workmanship, good relatively to the class of clothing to which the article in question belongs. Although it is doubtless true that in earlier days the presence of the union label bore almost no significance, the numerous precautions and safeguards that the union is now throwing about it should tend to arouse both respect for it and confidence in it, not only among those in sympathy with the union movement, but on the part of the general purchasing public as well.

The agreement entered into between the unions and the employers is in some respects a flexible one and varies somewhat in different sections of the country. This policy has had three results. It has given color to the claim that the union label does not stand for a definite reliable minimum of protection to the laborer; it has caused dissatisfaction among employers in some localities, who claim that they would be willing to enter into a uniform agreement to be enforced equally against their rivals, but maintain that under the present system they are discriminated against; and finally, it has resulted in the maintenance of some union shops in localities in which the rigid enforcement of all the requirements would have made them impossible. Because the label does not always stand for definite conditions, and also because many of the well-to-do classes object to the re-

quirement that only union labor shall be employed, and many others have given no thought to the matter, the demand for clothing bearing the label is restricted almost exclusively to the laboring classes. For this reason the label is found chiefly on garments intended for their use. In August, 1901, there were 125 manufacturers of labeled clothing in the United States and Canada, and 12,000 garment workers, of whom more than a half were women, were working under the label agreement. During the preceding year, from August, 1900, to August, 1901, fourteen and a half million labels had been sent out.[1] A paid Label Secretary is now employed. It is the purpose of the General Executive Board to devote as much time and money as possible to extending the use of the label and the demand for it.

In addition to the conservative policy which the United Garment Workers have evolved in trade matters should be noted its attitude with reference to political action. There are records of heated political debates in its early days, but it now frequently reaffirms the following resolution, which was unanimously substituted for a socialistic proposition at the convention of 1899: "*Resolved*, That we reaffirm the policy of the United Garment Workers of America as declared at all previous conventions; namely, that our work be confined strictly to trade matters, believing that by that means alone can unity and directness of purpose be secured, and while other methods may promise much, costly experience has plainly shown that the hope of the wage-workers alone lies in more compact organization on trade union lines, by the obtaining of gradual concessions from the employers, by improving the standard of living, by securing

[1] Henry White, *Report of the General Secretary, Tenth Annual Convention, The Garment Worker*, vol. v, no. 12, p. 10.

more independence in the shops and a higher standing in society."[1] Besides the resolution quoted above there is a standing rule which prohibits the discussion of any political subject at meetings of the unions, but public matters, not partisan in character and having a direct bearing upon the interests of labor, may be considered.[2]

The formal organization of the United Garment Workers is democratic. The initiative and referendum have been preserved and appeals are frequently made to the whole body of members, but, as is usually the case under such provisions, only a small vote is cast, rarely representing more than 25 per cent. of the members. The guiding power is exerted by a small group of men, who from the beginning have held responsible offices in the union, and who represent perhaps the most conservative influence in the body.

Such are the characteristic principles of the United Garment Workers, and I think it but fair to say that in the determination of the general policy of the union the women have had little, if any, influence. In the conventions they rarely speak on questions of broad interest, or upon the action to be taken in particular cases except those in which they are immediately concerned. They then occupy somewhat the position of expert witnesses. Their testimony is given only upon those points on which they are peculiarly fitted to speak, and, when it is given, it is directly to the point. Miss —— describes the conditions in the —— factory, and the convention at once dispatches a telegram to the firm, threatening to withdraw the label unless the demands of the employees

[1] *Eighth Annual Convention of United Garment Workers of America, The Garment Worker*, vol. v, no. 5, p. 19.

[2] *Constitution of the United Garment Workers of America*, 1901, *Standing Rules*, 21.

are immediately conceded. The Syracuse women make a united appeal for the aid of the international body in the establishment of a nine-hour day in the tailoring trade, and the women from the overalls factories all press for the establishment of a minimum price list for the making of overalls. In most cases the women delegates have been sent for the express purpose of presenting some such request. These appeals are usually fully discussed in the committee meetings, where some of the women manifest considerable ability. In general, then, it may be said that, while the routine business remains exclusively in the hands of the men, and while the men are responsible also for the determination of the general policy of the union and its action in the greater number of specific cases, the women perform valuable supplementary work. I might add that I am given to understand that the presence of the women has contributed not a little to the orderly character of the conventions and to the rapid dispatch of business.

So far as financial contributions to the International Union are concerned, and the benefits received from it, men and women stand nominally on precisely the same footing. In practice, however, there is a slight advantage in favor of the latter, since financial assistance in strikes is granted to them somewhat more readily. The chief income of the union is obtained from a per capita tax, which has increased by varying increments from three cents a month in 1891 to the present monthly tax of twelve cents. In addition to this the General Executive Board is permitted to levy a special strike assessment of five cents a week when it is considered necessary, and it has assumed the right to levy special assessments for other purposes. From August, 1900, to August, 1901, but six such special assessments were levied,

amounting in all to thirty cents per person.[1] Even this was an unusually heavy burden. Finally, twenty-five cents of each initiation fee also passes to the general body. The total receipts during the year were $35,-853.79. The chief expenses aside from the cost of labels, which is usually fully covered by the proceeds of their sale, are those involved in organizing unions, in paying the salaries of the president, secretary and clerks, and in advertising the label. Strike benefits paid during the year amounted to only $3,251. It is an interesting point that of this sum $2,725 went to women overalls workers engaged in a strike in Kansas City. Only when a strike has been endorsed by the General Executive Board do members have the right to call upon the United Garment Workers for aid. Then, if the funds permit, they have the right to a weekly payment of five dollars apiece. In addition to this, or when it is impossible to pay this, the General Executive Board may authorize the striking local union to send appeals for assistance to other local bodies. While the rights of all are equal, it is claimed that there is rather more readiness, on the part both of the General Executive Board and of the local unions, to extend aid to women than to men. This benefit is paid until the General Executive Board declares the strike at an end, or until the funds are exhausted.

Ever since the establishment of the union there has been a constant agitation in favor of the introduction of higher dues and of sickness and death benefit provisions. To the higher dues the women have always been opposed, and such increase as has been made has been in the face

[1] For these figures and those which follow see Henry White, *Report of the General Secretary, Tenth Annual Convention, The Garment Worker*, vol. v, no. 12, pp. 7 and 8.

of their opposition. The plan for the establishment by the International Union of a sickness and death benefit fund has met with opposition, especially from the cutters. It has at length been entirely abandoned in favor of the maintenance of such provisions by the local unions.

The United Garment Workers is allied with the American Federation of Labor. This alliance leaves the garment workers entirely free to regulate their own course of action. The Federation has no authority to call strikes in the garment trade or to exert any coercive influence over the union. It helps, however, in organizing local unions, in carrying on agitation for the label, and in developing sympathetic relations between different unions. No woman has ever represented the United Garment Workers at the annual conventions of the Federation.

Let us pass now to a study of the local unions composed either wholly or in part of women. We shall consider the history of all such unions between April, 1891, when the United Garment Workers of America was established, and April, 1900. No definite references can be given for the following facts, since they have been compiled either from the records of the organization or from the oral statements of union officials.

TABLE O.

COMPOSITION AND LENGTH OF LIFE OF WOMEN'S LOCAL UNIONS OF THE UNITED GARMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA.

Unions in Existence April, 1900.						Unions Disbanded Before April, 1900.			
Composition.	Number of Unions.	Time in Existence.	Number of Unions.	Sex.	Number of Members.	Composition.	Number of Unions.	Time in Existence.	Number of Unions.
More than 90 per cent. women.	24	Less than 6 months.	16	Male.	Less than 400.	More than 90 per cent. women.	27	No time.	12
		6 months to 1 year.	6					Less than 6 months.	6
		1 year.	7	Female.	More than 4,000.	Less than 90 per cent. and more than 75 per cent. women.	6	6 months to 1 year.	4
Less than 90 and more than 75 per cent. women.	25	2 years.	6					1 year.	7
		3 years.	3					2 years.	2
		4 years.	3					More than 2 years.	2
		5 years.	5						
		6 years.	1						
		7 years.	1						
		8 years.	1						
Total.	49		49		4,400		33		33

In the table above we notice:

First, that the unions in which both men and women are found in this industry are composed so largely of women that it is not necessary to distinguish between them and the unions composed exclusively of women.

Secondly, that up to April, 1900, women had conducted or participated in the affairs of 82 unions.

Thirdly, that this figure is somewhat deceptive, since 12 of the unions practically never existed at all; that is, a charter was taken out by some enthusiastic unionist, in which proceeding the women may possibly have had no share whatever, and the prospective organization failed to come to life, no dues were paid, and no record of members obtained.

Fourthly, that weak unions formed among women usually fall apart in less than two years, some not even living through the year. Of those that had maintained themselves more than two years, all but two still survived in 1900.

When we consider the circumstances under which the unions that have fallen apart were formed, we are usually able to discover at once the reasons why they were unable to maintain themselves. Such an investigation throws considerable light upon the feasibility of attempting to establish women's unions where the conditions are unfavorable. Each of these thirty-three unions was formed originally in one of three ways. Sometimes an employer, engaged in the manufacture of clothing, wanted the union label, and since, in order to obtain it, it was necessary to employ only union hands, he ordered the women to form a union. Such was the case in at least ten of these unions. These included six unions formed in small towns in Maine, where the women worked for Boston firms desiring the label. These women were far removed from

the mass of organized laber, had little, if any, communication with the general body except by letter, and were not only indifferent to the formation of the union, but were in some cases actually opposed to it, as it was regarded as nothing but an additional drain upon their low wages. Two of these label unions were formed in Columbus, Georgia, each of which consisted of the employees of a single shop. Of the other two cases one was that of a union in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in which the girls took no interest until they got into a disagreement with the General Executive Board; and the other was formed in Chicago, in a shop from which the label was withdrawn owing to bad sanitary conditions. In all of these cases the label was withdrawn after a short time, usually either because the employer failed to find it profitable, or because he failed to comply with the requisite conditions. Upon the withdrawal of the label the unions immediately went to pieces. In no instance were there surrounding circumstances of such a character as to arouse the interest or enthusiasm of the members. The membership was small, rarely exceeding twenty in a union.

In other cases unions were established through the influence of some man or of a small number of men. This group of unions is much larger than the preceding one, and includes eighteen of the thirty-three unions. The men were, in some instances, tailors who desired the women in the trade to be organized, that they might give aid in enforcing concessions from an unwilling employer; sometimes they were zealous unionists from other trades. In this group were several of the unions previously noted as having had practically no existence. Typical of this class was Local Union 137. This was composed of Polish tailoresses, who, having been called together and addressed by some man, immediately voted to form a union,

and never held another meeting. In other cases the unions were not only formed, but officered, by men, and, with two possible exceptions, all these unions dragged along without voluntary co-operation on the part of the women. There was no growth from within. Their suspension was speedily brought about through the non-payment of dues. There were two cases, however, to which this general description does not apply. Local Union 33 of Baltimore, Maryland, called the Ladies' Protective Association, and composed largely of Germans, showed marked independence. In the strike of 1896 these women encouraged the men to remain out and did everything in their power to prevent them from yielding. Even when the latter gave up the contest, the women refused for some time to go back to work. They were finally forced to make concessions, however, and in the general disaster of that year the union went to pieces. The other independent union was also in Baltimore. Local Union 98 was formed of Lithuanian women, and was dissolved under the same circumstances as the former. This union had combined with its industrial functions a certain semi-religious, semi-social character, which fact had undoubtedly contributed to its strength. The meetings were held in church in the presence of the priest, but partook largely of the nature of social gatherings.

Of the unions that have disappeared only one group remains to be noticed, and that the smallest and most interesting class. It consists of the unions formed not through the efforts of the employer or of the men, but at least in part by the spontaneous movement of the women themselves. There were but five of these unions. First of them comes the charter union, Local Union 16, to which reference has already been made. It is with

the history of this union, and often with this alone, that the student of women's unions is most familiar, if his attention has been confined to New York City; yet it has, perhaps, the least typical history of any of the eighty-two unions. Local Union 90, of Brooklyn, is the only other union whose experiences have been at all similar. Local Union 16 was composed largely of Jewish girls, a few of whom were bright, attractive speakers, interested in the establishment of their union and eager to extend their influence even beyond their own group. But it has been the experience of trade organizers, not only here but elsewhere, that it is extremely difficult to arouse in young Jewish girls any permanent interest in their work. It is not merely that they leave it upon marrying—in general the American girls do the same; but the possibility of marriage seems to interfere with any serious or earnest interest in work, while the American girls, so long as they remain at work, are interested and ambitious. Possibly owing to a clear understanding of the situation, the East-side Jewish tailor refuses to regard the industrial activity of the Jewish girls as worthy of serious attention, and thinks it hopeless to expect the women employees to be unionists. As a result we have from Local Union 16 what is, so far as I am aware, the only complaint issued by women in the garment trade of failure on the part of the men to give all due assistance. In general, as we have seen, the situation has been quite the reverse. It has been the men who have worked against odds to organize the women. The resolution introduced at the fifth convention of Local Union 16 was as follows:

WHEREAS, The female garment workers have not been given the necessary co-operation by the other tailor unions of the United Gar-

ment Workers of America in order to improve their condition; therefore,

Resolved, That it is the sense of this convention that in all recognized union shops all the female employees be obliged to be good-standing members of their respective unions. Further,

Resolved, That the incoming General Executive Board be instructed to devote special efforts in organizing the women workers of the trade.[1]

After several pseudo-deaths Local Union 16 finally came to an end in 1897. The dissolution is probably to be regarded as marking the abandonment, for the present at least, of all attempts to form unions among the Jewish women garment workers in New York. Nor, as a matter of fact, does the union regard the mass of east-side tailors as affording available material for trade union purposes.

Of the remainder of the unions in this group, I shall say just a word before passing to the consideration of the unions still surviving. Local Union 90, of Brooklyn, had an experience somewhat similar to that of Number 16, but did not maintain itself for so long a time. Local Union 120, of Dubuque, Iowa, was composed of sixty girls, who declared a strike, and then applied to the United Garment Workers for a charter. The union looks rather askance upon recruits who appear under such circumstances, but in this case the body was accepted. The strike was a failure, and the local union was soon after suspended for the non-payment of dues. The other two unions were formed with some interest on the part of the members, but the interest gradually died out and the unions came to an end.

We will now analyze in a similar way the forty-nine unions among the women in the garment trade, which

[1] *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the United Garment Workers of America, The Garment Worker*, vol. iii, no. 1, p. 6.

were in existence in 1900. With reference to the influences instrumental in the formation of the unions, we notice a marked contrast between this class and the preceding one. While in the latter class eighteen unions owed their establishment to the personal exertions of the union men, in the present class only four trace their origin exclusively to that influence, although in many instances the men undoubtedly gave some assistance. As against ten of the extinct unions organized through the label, thirty-seven of the existing unions were so organized; a very large percentage of the total number. Under the general heading of unions formed through the label I would suggest three sub-classes, the first to include all unions where the employees are entirely indifferent or are opposed to organization; the second to consist of those bodies the members of which are now active unionists; and the third to include the remaining cases, in which the relations between employer and employee are influenced by special and differing conditions. In the class characterized by perfect passivity on the part of the employees we must place at least eleven unions. Any one of these would go to pieces at once if the label were withdrawn, and the existence of the organization at present confers no benefits upon its members. Typical cases under this head are unions formed in two of the southern factories among the girls working in cotton mills. In as many as twenty-three cases, however, we find that unions formed under the influence of the label are active and progressive. In this number are included most of the large women's unions, regarded by the entire body of garment workers as successful. Of the twenty-three, eleven are composed of employees in large overalls factories, while four of the others are located in Syracuse, a city which has the distinction, from

the trades union point of view, of being better organized than any other city in the country. Of the third class there are three unions, one in a co-operative factory in Alabama, the stock for which was subscribed by union men, a second in Ontario under a philanthropic employer who is trying to create a model factory, and a third in Dover, New Jersey, where the employer is himself a union man.

In addition to the large group of unions formed under the label, and the small group previously referred to as organized by union men, there is among existing unions a group of seven, in the establishment of which the women have taken the initiative. Among these the organization at Streator, Illinois, is, perhaps, the most prominent. It existed for some time as a social club before assuming the form of a trade union.

From the study of these individual cases we are justified in drawing certain general conclusions:

1. That while nine or ten years ago, in the early days of the United Garment Workers, the great part in the organization of women's unions was performed by men, and the union, if maintained, was kept up chiefly through the efforts of the men, such is no longer the case.

2. That at the present time the most powerful influence for the formation of unions among women is the union label.

3. That the union label is unable of itself to guarantee the continued existence of an efficient union, yet the existence of such a union is essential to the protection of the label.

4. That the support and sympathy which comes from the presence of a large body of unionists in the community is of great importance.

5. That although women have as yet rarely established

permanent local unions, they can and do successfully maintain them under favorable circumstances.

Let us now examine somewhat more closely the distribution, composition, and nature of the unions in which women are found. Of the 96 unions in the United Garment Workers existing in April, 1902, and formed wholly or in part of women, the geographical distribution is as follows: New York, 14; Ohio, 11; Illinois, 8; Missouri, 5; Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Wisconsin, 4 each; Tennessee, Georgia, Indiana, 3 each; Alabama, Connecticut, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Texas, Virginia, 2 each; California, Colorado, Louisiana, Manitoba, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, 1 each. Of the 14 found in New York State only two are in New York City. One of these is a union in Brooklyn composed of German men and women, and the other is a small union in the Borough of Manhattan, formed chiefly of women operators on overalls and cotton suits. It is not profitable to make any detailed study of New York City in this connection, since the class of factories which furnishes most of the women unionists is not found to any extent in that city, and since the women clothing-workers there for the most part belong to nationalities that have not been largely organized.

In July, 1901, question blanks were sent out to most of the organizations in the United Garment Workers of America which contained women members. As these blanks were distributed by the General Secretary and the questions were answered by the officials of the local unions, such information as they contain is in general both accurate and reliable. The following table gives a summary of the replies received to some of the more important questions:

TABLE P.

WOMEN'S LOCAL UNIONS OF THE UNITED GARMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA.

Number of unions from which reports are here tabulated . . . 34

Legal status of unions—
- Number of incorporated unions 11
- Number of unincorporated unions 23

Branches of the trade represented—
- Number of unions whose members work on cotton suits, general workingmen's suits, and overalls 26
- Number of unions whose members work on regular coats, pants, or vests 8

Composition of the unions according to sex—
- Number of unions having more than 90 per cent. of their members women (men 150, women 2,281) 20
- Number of unions having less than 90 per cent. and more than 75 per cent. of their members women (men 122, women 862). 11
- Number of unions having less than 60 per cent. of their members women (men 62, women 59) 3
- Number of unions reported in all classes (men 334, women 3,208) 34

Meetings—
- Frequency of meetings—
  - Number of unions holding monthly meetings 18
  - Number of unions meeting semi-monthly . . . 13
  - Number of unions meeting weekly . . 3
- Average attendance at meetings 36%

Relation of unions to employers—
- Number of unions each composed exclusively of employees of one firm . 17
- Number of unions each composed exclusively of employees of two firms 8
- Number of unions each composed of employees of more than two firms 9
- Number of employers using the union label 53
- Number of employers not using the union label 17

Officers—
- Officers in the local unions—
  - Number of men 82
  - Number of women 268

Representation of the local unions in trades councils—	
Number of unions sending male delegates	2
Number of unions sending female delegates	1
Representation of the local unions in central federations—	
Number of unions sending male delegates only	4
Number of unions sending female delegates only	3
Number of unions sending both male and female delegates.	15
Number of male delegates	46
Number of female delegates	58
Dues—	
Initiation fee—	
Number of unions imposing $2.00	1
Number of unions imposing $1.00	13
Number of unions imposing 75 cents	1
Number of unions imposing 50 cents	15
Number of unions imposing 25 cents	1
Number of unions imposing different sums on men and on women[1]	3
Monthly dues—	
Number of unions imposing 40 cents	1
Number of unions imposing 30 cents	2
Number of unions imposing 25 cents	29
Number of unions imposing different sums on men and on women[2]	2
Benefits—	
Number of unions paying benefits for sickness only	5
Number of unions paying benefits for sickness and for death	1
Number of unions paying benefits for sickness and for lack of work	1
Total number of unions reporting benefits of any kind	7

In regard to one matter the statement made in this report is probably not correct. Some unions I know are incorporated, but I think not so many as here appear. There is good reason to suppose that the question about incorporation was by some officials interpreted to refer to the possession of a charter from the national union, and that some of the local unions which

[1] The fees imposed in these three cases are for men, $5, $5, and $1; for women, $2.50, 50 cents, and 50 cents.

[2] The dues imposed are $1.50 for men in both cases and 50 cents for women.

appear in the column of incorporated unions do not belong there. Several facts brought out by this table are especially significant: the large percentage of unions whose employees are found among operators on overalls and light-weight suits, the number of unions all of whose members are working for a single employer or for but two firms, the large number of label firms, the extent to which the active control of local unions and the representation of such unions in trades councils and central federations devolves upon the women officials, and the lowness of the dues in most of the unions. But few of the unions have established benefit features, as they are not regarded with much favor by the women. In the future, however, the adoption of a sick benefit plan is to be required of all unions desiring to become affiliated with the United Garment Workers of America.

What are the functions actually performed by these women's unions? Have they, after all, anything more than the mere form of an organization, with a membership created by an artificial stimulus, and incapable of performing any real service? Of some of them, as we have already noticed, this is a fair description, but it is not true of all. It proved to be practically impossible to make a detailed study of the economic, educational, and social functions of such a large number of unions. Therefore, in order to get a more accurate idea of the actual results of the organization of women workers, I concentrated my attention upon eight of the oldest unions, with a total membership of about 2,000 women and 200 men. None of these unions is less than five years old, and one has been in existence twice that length of time. The conditions found to prevail in these organizations should then be fairly typical for the stronger unions.

The members of these organizations are practically all girls born in America, frequently of Irish or German parentage, but in perhaps the majority of cases with American parents. There is a slight sprinkling of Jewish and Polish women, constituting probably not more than one per cent. of the total number. Nearly all of the girls have had a common-school education. In all of the eight unions the women are employed on light cotton coats, pants, or vests, or on overalls. In rare cases some work is performed on workingmen's woolen suits not regularly tailored. In each case all the members of the union work in a single shop or factory for one employer, who uses the label on his goods. What are the relations between this employer and his employees? Does the union exist chiefly in his interest, in order to secure to him the right to use the label? Is it entirely subservient to his purposes?

In the first place, these unions are not directly subsidized by the employer. In five of the unions he has never given financial aid to the organization. To one union the firm employing the members offered to give $100 to help establish a sick benefit fund. In a second case the traveling expenses of a delegate to the national convention were paid by the firm in one instance. In the third case donations have been made once or twice when especially requested. All of these were isolated and special acts of kindness on the part of friendly employers. The financial burdens of the unions were borne by the members.

What are the relations between the employer and the union when questions of wages are in dispute? Practically all the women are paid at piece rates. In each of these factories the rates are fixed by an annual agreement between the employer and a committee appointed by the

union, representing the different departments of the shop. There is a union standard of piece rates which is supposed to serve as a minimum in all union factories. Two of the factories have schedules corresponding very nearly to the union standard, one pays higher rates on some articles and lower on others, and the remaining five apparently pay somewhat higher prices. Does the existence of the union have any measurable effect upon the scale of prices? In one factory the connection has been clear. The right to use the label was refused until the wages were raised to the standard rates, and they have not since been reduced. In a second factory difficulty in adjusting the rate of wages has occurred on four or five occasions; the general officers of the union have been called in and a compromise has been reached. In the remaining six cases no appeal for the assistance of the general officers has been made, but the comparison of prices and privileges, which connection with the union has made possible, has placed the employees in a position where they were better able to decide what demands they might properly make and insist upon. Local abuses in the matter of fines, local exactions, and local low prices are less easily maintained when employees are thoroughly familiar with the conditions prevailing elsewhere.

In some cases, however, disagreements cannot be amicably settled. Frequent strikes are much to be deplored, but a union which is never ready to strike to enforce its demands has little strength. If these label unions are, as is sometimes claimed, only tools in the hands of their employers, we shall certainly never find them resorting to such measures. Of these eight unions four have at one time or another declared strikes. They have engaged in five strikes, in four of which they were

successful. One was against a reduction of wages, and three for an increase. The fifth case was one in which there was a misunderstanding as to the price agreement. The General Executive Board investigated the case, decided that the employer was right in his contention, and ordered the members of the local union to return to work. None of these strikes was prolonged over three weeks, and in only one was any assistance required from either the international body or other local unions. In the history of other unions of women clothing workers, however, there are records of longer and more persistent strikes. One in Peoria, Illinois, which had lasted three months, and in which 125 women, operators on overalls and shirts, had participated, was terminated on May 1, 1902, by the success of the strikers.

These strikes have usually been conducted in a firm and dignified manner. The advantages possessed by the union women on strike consist not so much in the financial support on which they can count, though this is in some cases extremely important, as in their habit of acting together with a common purpose, and in their possession of trained leaders in whom they have confidence. The women holding official positions in the unions, or sent as delegates to the Central Federations or the National Conventions, find in their union work a school in which knowledge of the prevailing conditions of the trade is gained, clearness of judgment is developed, and frequently a sense of responsibility and fairmindedness. In every large union of women is found a small group of able members whose influence is generally felt throughout the body. Their position is frequently conservative, and their influence is often exerted to prevent hasty and ill-considered action. It would be unfair to leave the impression that the existence of the unions tends to

frequent disagreements between employer and employed. It is perhaps as often true that they are responsible for the recognition of the fact that some claims cannot be pushed as that others can. And in many cases difficulties are settled through the mediation of the national officers which in unorganized factories would undoubtedly result in strikes and temporary abandonment of work. While in several instances the formation of a union has been opposed by employers, as in the Peoria case previously mentioned, other employers, like Mr. Carhart of Detroit, prefer to deal with an organization, feeling that it works in favor of the fair employer against the unfair.

It is upon the ability of labor unions to improve the economic condition of their members that their chief claim to consideration is usually based. Various methods have been adopted to accomplish this object which have as yet found no place in the women's organizations. Competition among the women working on the class of goods that we have been considering is not keen, and the demand for their work is increasing. Consequently there has been no attempt to limit the supply of labor by apprenticeship regulations, and no attempt to increase the demand by limiting the output. The desire has been to make the hours, wages, and general conditions found in the best factories prevail throughout the trade, and steadily to raise rather than lower the standard. While in some cases the formation of the union has made little difference in the economic standing of its members, in others, in the various ways and for the various reasons already noted, it has been efficacious.

To the educational benefits which some of the women derive from the union reference has already been made. Naturally there are comparatively few who participate in

these. The majority of the women are not deeply interested in union matters or much affected by them. But the sanity of judgment and the business ability developed in some of the women is noteworthy, and it is to a great extent responsible for the economic benefits obtained by the body as a whole.

Aside from external influences, such as the employer's desire to retain the union label and consequent encouragement to the union, the most important factor in keeping these women's unions together is probably to be found in their social functions. These are especially prominent in the small towns and cities, and do much to retain the interest of the members when no immediate economic incentive to membership exists. The great problem is not to induce a group of women to form a union when they wish to rebel against some injustice and realize that they can do so effectively only in combination. The difficulty is to persuade them to remain together, to hold regular meetings, to pay regular dues, when all is peaceful, and they see no direct and immediate return for such expenditure of time and money. For various reasons sickness, death and out-of-work benefits appeal less strongly to the women than to the men. Among the latter these constitute probably the most powerful inducement to retain membership during seasons of peace and plenty. In the women's unions the development of social attractions performs much the same service. Unless through practical compulsion from without, I doubt whether any women's union has maintained itself with a large membership for a considerable number of years without the aid of dances, card parties, and social gatherings of other kinds. The greater ease with which social bonds are developed in the small towns and cities accounts largely for the greater activity of the unions located in small places.

To the general statements already made on the subject of the establishment of women's unions we may add, from our study of eight well-established organizations, the following conclusions:

1. Successful unions have usually been found among fairly-well educated American girls of American, Irish, or German parentage.

2. Such women are chiefly engaged in the more highly-skilled and highly-paid work on clothing—that is, in operating on light-weight goods rather than in finishing clothing.

3. They are found chiefly in factories, working for employers using the union label.

4. While the desire of the employer to retain the label is a powerful support to the union, such a union acts frequently for the independent good of its members and not as the mere tool of the employer.

5. There are numerous instances in which the economic benefits derived by members from the existence of the union are clearly shown.

6. One of the most important results flowing from the existence of women's unions is to be found in the development of trained, intelligent, and conservative working-women.

7. The unions frequently serve to check hasty and inconsiderate action, and to substitute arbitration and mutual concessions for more violent measures.

8. Social gatherings of various kinds are extremely helpful, if not absolutely essential, to the retention of the interest of the majority of women members during the prolonged periods when they are working for no direct and immediate economic advantage.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In our description of the various classes of women employed in the ready-made clothing trade and of the circumstances surrounding their labor we have distinguished two chief groups, the home finishers, and the skilled or unskilled employees in the shops and factories. Within the second group wide differences were discovered, and the women operating on overalls and men's suits in the factories were noted as an especially intelligent and prosperous body. We have considered the various efforts made to better the condition of these women workers either through legislation or through labor organizations.

A sharp distinction, however, must be drawn between the protection given to the home workers and that extended to the women employed in shops and factories. Labor legislation, as it applies to shops and factories, has been passed primarily in the interest of the employes, and often through their efforts. To a certain extent the purchasing public may be affected, but that is a somewhat incidental matter. Obligation is placed upon the employer to conform to certain requirements of safety and of sanitation, and often to certain limitations as to hours of employment. Occasionally these regulations are of such a nature as to bear with special weight upon particular classes of employers, and through the inability of these employers to live up to the requirements, and

their consequent withdrawal from business, discomfort is sometimes entailed upon the laborer. A change from one employer to another may be necessitated. But only when legislation goes so far as to increase appreciably the general cost of production in the locality, and thus to drive the trade to other regions, does the workman actually suffer. In the clothing industry Massachusetts is the only state in which it is claimed that loss of trade has resulted from legislation. This special case we shall consider later on. The possibility of such a result, however, should be kept in mind as a check to extreme legislation.

Trade union efforts tend in the same direction as labor legislation, that is, toward the protection of the employee in the shop or factory through the placing of restrictions upon the freedom of action of the employer. It is true that one sometimes finds special union regulations limiting the amount of work to be done in a given time, and such restrictions may prove to be burdensome to individual employees. Among the United Garment Workers, however, I know of no case in which women have been restrained by any such regulations from earning as much as they were able to earn. While legislation is directed chiefly towards creating better conditions of safety and sanitation, unions are striving to reduce hours of labor and to increase rates of payment. The action of the unions, however, is far more limited in regard to the number of people benefited than is that of legislation. While the provisions of the factory law are enforced with varying degrees of rigidity in all shops and factories, the benefits of the union are usually enjoyed only by the better paid and more efficient workers.

It is generally conceded that the legal protection afforded women workers in shops and factories in New York

State is ample, and no radical change in the fundamental regulations is soon to be expected. Gradual improvement may be brought about, however, through enforcement of the law in the smaller shops. Neither is there prospect of any marked change in the position of this class of women workers as a result of trade union activity. Such improvements as may be brought about will be largely for the benefit of the higher class of employees.

The relation of the home worker to both legislation and trade union action is entirely different from that of the factory girl. One of the greatest objections that the union has to home work is due to the fact that it is practically impossible to organize home workers. Of the thousands of Italian women in New York engaged in the work it would be difficult to find a hundred among whom trade union ideas and principles would arouse any effective interest. It is, therefore, impossible to expect that under existing methods of work the wages of the home workers will be improved through trade organization. In one way, however, these women may be affected by the position taken by the unions. Among the demands which the United Garment Workers is attempting to enforce is one that all work shall be done in the shop or factory of the employer. In so far as this demand is enforced home work will be abolished. The effect of such a change upon the home workers would be no different from the effect if the abolition were brought about through the machinery of the law. This we shall soon consider.

While legislation prescribing conditions of safety and sanitation is for the protection of the factory and shop girl, and the burden of observing it rests upon the employer, in the case of the home finisher such restrictions

do not affect the employer, since he has no control over the work people, but put compulsion upon the worker herself. In a few cases unwilling landlords may make small improvements that would go unattended to but for complaints forced from tenants under the fear of loss of work, but in general such improvements as are made are due to action on the part of the worker which, in her own judgment, is not desirable. So long as the fulfillment of the requirements of the law means simply a somewhat greater degree of cleanliness or less overcrowding, it may perhaps be fairly claimed that, however unwelcome to the worker, the demands are for her real good. But when the question is one of raising this standard to a point practically prohibitive to the class that would be affected, or of directly abolishing this kind of work, the case is by no means so clear, and demands careful consideration in the light of all the facts that have been obtained.

There are five classes to be taken into account in dealing with the question of the close restriction or practical abolition of home work in the ready-made clothing trade: the purchasers of goods, the employers, the employees in the trade in general, the home workers, and the successors of the home workers. Owing to the crowded and unsanitary quarters in which home finishing is carried on, and the difficulty of discovering promptly cases of contagious disease, it is frequently urged that, in order to protect buyers from unclean and disease-laden clothing, home finishing of ready-made clothing should be entirely abolished. The possibility of putting an end to it in New York without further legislation, through a rigid interpretation of the present statutes by the factory inspector, has already been pointed out. Such a course, while it could not guarantee immunity from disease carried by clothing, would undoubtedly diminish the danger

of it, and create a fair presumption that clothing was manufactured under more cleanly conditions. If the assumption may be made that no increase in the market price of the product would occur, from the point of view of the consumer the change would be wholly desirable.

The objections made by employers to having all their work finished in the shop or factory rest partly upon the expense involved in securing the additional room, and partly upon the fact that giving out work saves trouble. The piece rate paid the finisher is usually about the same whether the work is performed in the shop or at home. But the additional cost of finishing, if work at home were entirely prohibited, would not be represented merely by the cost of providing work room. A large proportion of the home finishers would not follow the work to the shop, and a slightly increased rate of payment might be found necessary to induce a sufficient number of women to go into the work. How great a rise in price would occur, and how long it would continue, it would be difficult to say. It seems probable that a somewhat higher rate could be permanently maintained. It is conceivable that the increased cost of production might be sufficient to cripple the ready-made clothing industry in New York, but that is not at all probable. In the first place, the cost of finishing is a relatively small part of the cost of manufacturing clothing, and a slight variation in it would therefore not have important results. The effect would be unequally felt in different branches of the trade, since finishing is of different relative importance. In the second place, it is true that the labor cost of finishing is at present lower in New York than in other cities; lower than in Chicago, for example, one of its chief competitors. And in the third place, the predominance of New York in the trade

is too firmly established, and is supported by other factors of too great importance, for it to be easily overcome.

There are unfortunately no facts available which show exactly the effect of the abolition of home finishing upon the cost of production of ready-made clothing. There is but one other State where the labor legislation affecting this industry is as strict as in New York. Massachusetts laws are not widely different from those of New York, and it is generally conceded that they are somewhat more rigidly enforced. Boston has failed to hold its former place as a clothing center, and alarmists are fond of pointing to it as an example of the evils of strict legislation. As a matter of fact, however, it is by no means clear that the decadence of the industry has been due to the strictness with which the factory laws are enforced. Many who are familiar with the conditions of the industry in that city as well as in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia attest that this decadence is due to the unprogressive methods of the Boston manufacturers.

That in rare cases individual employers barely able under present conditions to maintain themselves might be seriously affected by the necessity of employing finishers in their shops is probable, but there seems to be no reason to suppose either that the clothing industry as a whole in New York would be crippled, or its expansion seriously checked.

The extent to which the employees other than the finishers would be affected by the abolition of home finishing would depend entirely upon the local prosperity of the trade under the changed conditions. That many of these employees have no fear of the results of such a policy appears from the support given the movement against home work by the United Garment Workers,

who are pressing for its extermination as a benefit to union garment workers as a body.

We must consider now the group which is after all most nearly concerned with such changes as have been indicated. It is often assumed on the one hand that because work on clothing is being performed under conditions so distasteful, and in some cases distressing, to the public, therefore considerations of sympathy should combine with those of self-interest to lead to its suppression. It is supposed that the poor woman who is restrained from working is necessarily in a better physical and mental condition than she would be if she were permitted to exhaust her energies. The advantages of employment in the light and clean factory are also pointed out. On the other hand we find many sympathizers with the hypothetical poor widow who finds in this work the only possibility of maintaining herself and her children. From our previous detailed study of the home finishers several points that have an important bearing on this question have made themselves clear.

I. In the ready-made clothing trade those women who are free to choose are at present working in the shops or factories.

II. The finishers working at home are almost exclusively married women.

III. They are chiefly women with children, or women who expect soon to have children.

IV. Home finishing is not resorted to by widows supporting families, neither is it performed to any extent for "pin money." The earnings of the finishers, while small, are of value in supplementing the wages of their husbands, since the latter are almost invariably employed at work by its very nature irregular.

V. Home finishing is an aid in rendering the family

self-supporting, and in many cases has made charitable aid unnecessary.

VI. Home finishing is not to any appreciable extent pursued by people in regular receipt of charitable assistance.

What would be the effect upon the workers if home finishing were practically suppressed? Either the women would follow the work to the shop, or they would give up working. Very few of them could choose the former alternative, except by leaving at home small children who need their care. Unquestionably it is better for the family that the work should be done at home than it would be for the mother to go to the shop. In the majority of cases it would probably be found necessary for the work to be given up. This is frequently regarded as socially desirable, and the claim is made that the additional pressure placed upon the husband would result in increased effort on his part, and the maintenance of the same standard of living, while the time of the wife could be fully devoted to her home duties. In some families this might actually be the result. The process of adjustment would not be the same in all cases. The nature of the work performed by a very great part of the men, however, and the low wages received by them, make it highly probable that in many instances there would of necessity follow either an enforced reduction of the already low family expenses, or a resort to charity. It has been suggested that this difficulty would in time remedy itself, since, as most of the workers are Italian immigrants, the greater the difficulty encountered by them in maintaining themselves here the fewer of their countrymen would be led to join them, and with the reduction in the supply of this class of labor its reward would rise. But surely other methods of regulating

immigration have more to commend them than that of placing difficulties in the way of industrious workers already in this country. Neither is the gain to the home from the additional time of the mother of so much importance as is frequently implied. Until the women have more knowledge of household matters and a higher standard of cleanliness, additional time will produce few beneficial results. They have but two rooms, do little cooking, and spend almost nothing on clothes. They and their families appreciate the gain in comfort from a slightly increased income. If that is reduced, it is not easy to see how, under existing conditions, an equal amount of comfort would be secured to them.

It is not difficult to believe that the shop and factory girls who might supersede the home finishers would perform their work under better sanitary conditions, and would receive higher weekly wages. But it is a mistake to assume that this would indicate an improvement in the condition of the former home finishers. Where these women followed their work to the shop this improvement would be obtained through the extremely unfortunate method of separating the mother from her family; but in the majority of instances all that the change would signify would be that work, previously performed by one class in the community, had now been taken over by a different class. Since for the latter class, consisting of girls and women free to perform work wherever they may be needed, there is a relatively larger possible field of employment than for those who are restricted to working in their own homes, the general conditions of employment, including rate of payment, would be more desirable in the case of shop girls than among the home finishers whom they wish to supersede. This is often brought forward as an argument in favor of the suppression of

home finishing, and is a favorite point with labor leaders. Whatever conclusion may be reached as to the desirability of the change, there should be kept clearly in mind the difference between an improvement in the condition of one group of workers, and the mere transference of work from a group less favorably situated to another group more favorably situated.

The position of the home finisher then seems to be such that she cannot be aided to any extent either by labor legislation or by trade-union effort. Her condition can be improved only through the general economic, social and intellectual progress of the class to which she belongs. Such progress would result in largely diminishing the number of women engaged in this work, were it not that their ranks are constantly recruited from among the newly arrived immigrants. As long as this supply of workers keeps up, the problem of so restricting home finishing as to extend a fair amount of protection to the purchaser of goods, while at the same time leaving open to industrious wives and mothers opportunities for work, will remain a complicated and difficult one. That it would be to the public interest to carry the restriction of such work much further than it is carried at present is true, but that this process would entail much discomfort should also not be forgotten.

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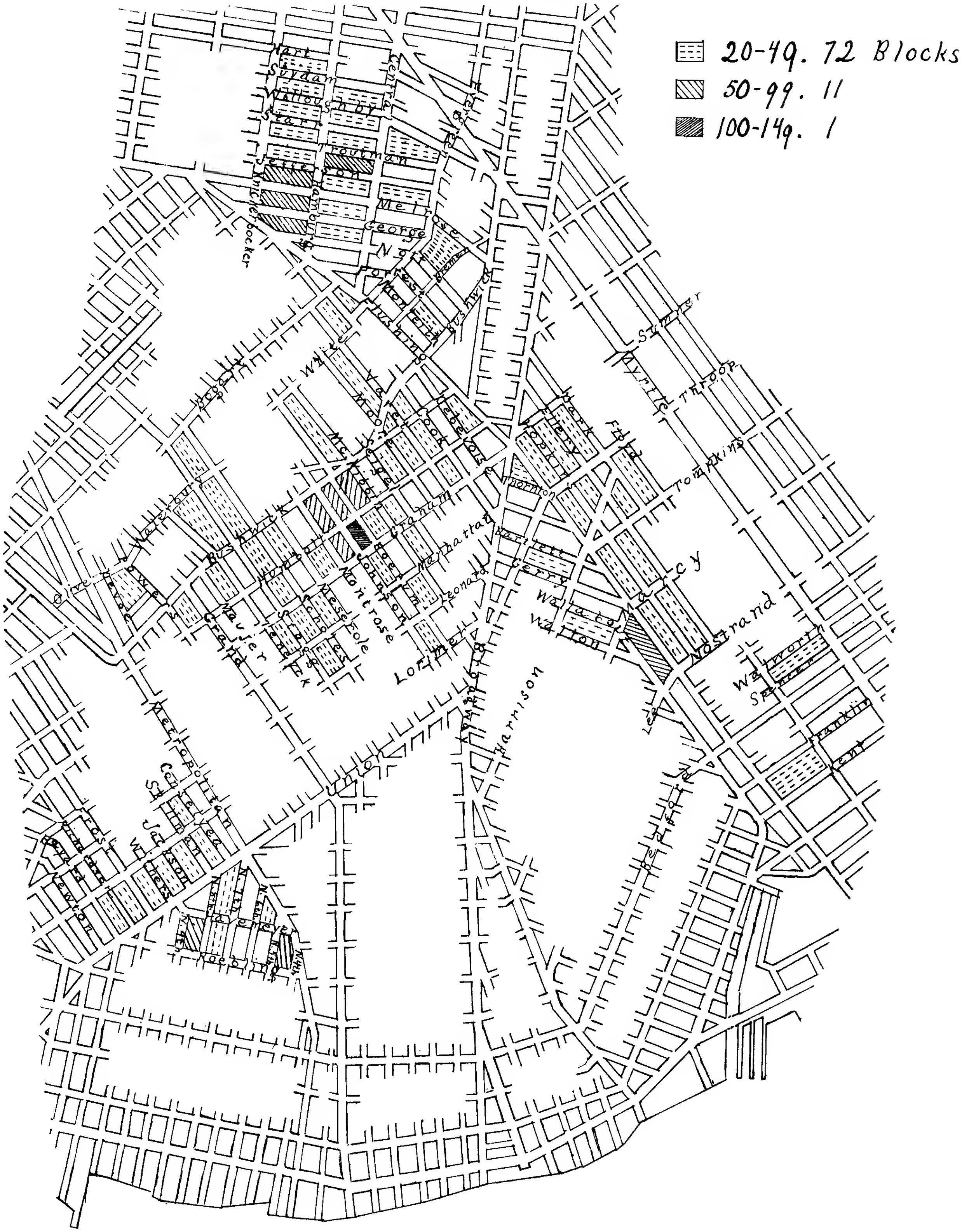

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